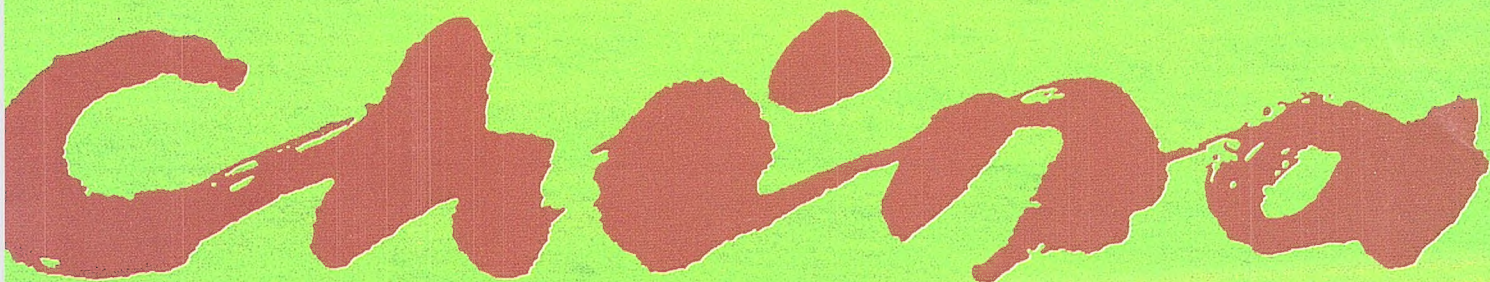


AUGUST 2000

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C H I N A T O U R I S M



HULUN BUIR — A LAND OF ROMANCE

QINGDAO: AN IRRESISTIBLE SUMMER RESORT
GROTTO CARVINGS ON SHIBAO MOUNTAIN

241

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The Enjoyable Shopping at Beijing Lufthansa Center



On the shore of the placid Liangma River in eastern part of Beijing, the imposing Lufthansa Youyi Shopping Centre stands in the style of an European castle, occupying an area of 6,000 square metres. Along with five-star hotels such as Kempinski, Kunlun and Great Wall Sheraton in the vicinity, this shopping centre greatly contributes to this emerging prosperous commercial area.

It has been eight years since the Lufthansa Youyi Shopping Centre opened on June 30, 1992. The first retail enterprise with both local and foreign capital since the founding of New China, this shopping centre is the forerunner in the industry. It has adopted a modern management and administration system which is embodied in the following aspects:

Pioneering management concept: To become "the best in the country and in line with international standards" is Lufthansa's ultimate target. To provide "a most enjoyable shopping experience" is Lufthansa's promise to its customers.

Precise market positioning: Lufthansa markets its merchandise as "middle and higher class" products targeting customers who have comparatively higher spending power, foreign residents in Beijing and overseas tourist groups. The sales figures have proved Lufthansa's tactic successful.

Advanced management and sales strategies: Lufthansa establishes its own management and sales strategies with experience from the leading shopping centres both at home and abroad. They have changed the business relationship between customers and vendors into one that involves satisfaction in customer services. The key to achieving this is to "respect and understand" the customers' needs.

Professional and systematic product management: At present, Lufthansa merchandises 400,000 items of quality commodities of 100,000 varieties. Almost all the famous domestic brands can be found in Lufthansa, in addition to 500 international labels.

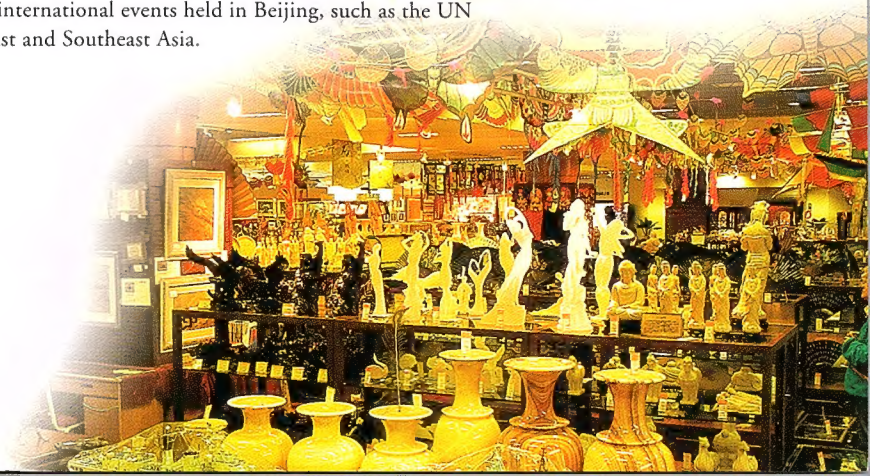
A window in Beijing which showcases China's reform and opening-up policy, Lufthansa Youyi Shopping Centre has received hundreds of thousands of local and foreign customers, including a good number of heads of state and governments, and international celebrities. It is also the appointed shopping centre for the attendants of major international events held in Beijing, such as the UN World Women's Conference and the Special Olympics of Far East and Southeast Asia.



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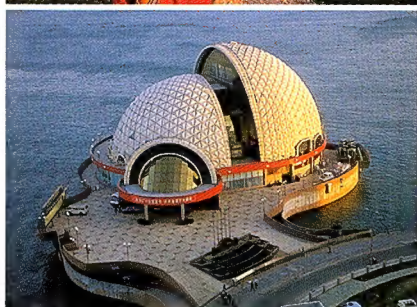
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Photos & article by Huang Yanhong

Hulun Buir in Inner Mongolia is the native place of Genghis Khan, the gallant founder of the Yuan Dynasty. You will be embraced by this vast land's natural beauty — grasslands with herds of horses and flocks of sheep, pure blue lakes, and pollution-free forests. The local people are equally as interesting. In the forests of Aoluguya, you'll meet the Ewenkis and their reindeer. Numerous tourist programmes have been developed in the area, and holiday resorts have been built on the grassland as well as by the sea-like Hulun Lake.

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Photos & article by Wu Pingguan

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Photos & article by Shan Xiaogang

Qingdao, on the Shandong Peninsula by the Yellow Sea, is an irresistible summer resort. Its numerous beaches with blue sea and white sands attract swimmers from all over the world; its gorgeous European-style buildings are yet another attraction; and still, many tourists come simply for its seafood.

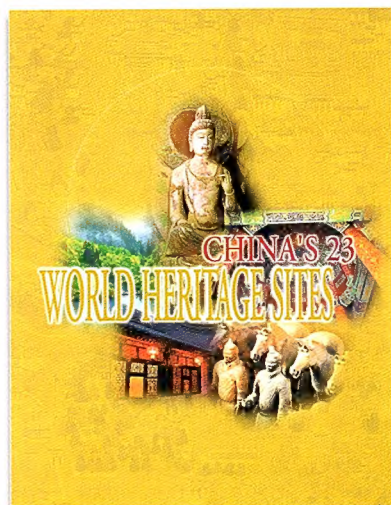
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HOT OFF THE PRESS

China's 23 World Heritage Sites



Today, more than 580 cultural and natural sites have been placed on UNESCO's World Heritage list. China, one of the world's four ancient civilisations, also has its share of these heritage sites. Up to 1999, 23 sites in the country have been honourably put on the list. These include the Mountain Resort in Chengde, the Temple of Heaven, the Ruins of Zhoukoudian, the Great Wall, the Forbidden City, the Summer Palace, the ancient city of Pingyao, Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang, Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum in Xi'an, Wulingyuan, Huanglong, Jiuzhaigou, Mount Emei, the ancient town of Lijiang, Potala Palace, Mount Wudang, Mount Taishan, Confucius' Temple,

Mansion and Cemetery in Qufu, Suzhou Gardens, Mount Huangshan, Mount Lushan, Mount Wuyi and Dazu Rock Carvings.

In this book, *China's 23 World Heritage Sites*, you can delight in the beauty of each one of these sites. Incredibly gorgeous pictures together with a practical travel guide add to the book's comprehensive nature and make it a great gift for you and your friends.

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Photos & article by Ma Li

Ever since James Hilton described an idealistic place, Shangri-La, in his novel *Lost Horizon*, thousands of people have been looking for this utopian land. A group of foreign tourists travelled in the area bordering Yunnan, Sichuan and Tibet, again, looking for the Shangri-La.

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Photos by Li Yaobo Article by Dong Ai

The Dai people celebrate their New Year with a Water Splashing Festival. For three days during the Dai New Year, a series of celebrations are held in Jinggu, Yunnan, many of them based on the Dai people's belief in Buddhism.

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DIVERSE TRAVEL DESTINATIONS

What type of traveller are you? A nature lover? A disciple of thrilling tourist programmes? A devotee of cultural and historical relics? A photographic buff? Or a combination of all of these? No matter which group you fall into, you will find something to your liking in this issue.

Hulun Buir in Inner Mongolia boasts the most beautiful grasslands in China. In mid-summer, the azure skies and the crystal-clear lakes set off the broad expanse of greenery exceptionally well, presenting a real delight to the eyes. Apart from its natural attractions, Hulun Buir is also coloured with the wonderful folklore of its ethnic people.

Qingdao in Shandong Province is well worthy of its reputation as the Pearl of the Yellow Sea. Its German-style buildings bring about an exotic ambience to the city, while its beautiful beaches bewitch every visitor. Beer aficionados will fall in love with the joyous occasion of the Qingdao International Beer Festival held in summer annually.

The relics housed in Shibao (Stone Treasure) Mountain in Jianchuan, Yunnan Province, justify its name. It is the whereabouts of a rich collection of grotto carvings depicting the history of the Nanzhao Kingdom more than 1,000 years ago. The Baoxiang Temple, known as the Hanging Temple of Yunnan, on the mountain, also takes the visitors' breath away.

On primitive sheepskin rafts, the members of the Yellow River Exploration Drifting Team braved the roaring river to cover a 2,500-km distance from Lanzhou in Gansu Province to Baotou in Inner Mongolia. One of the team members, a non-swimmer, recalls the arduous yet rewarding journey.

Photo by Huang Yanhong





Largest Collection of Lotus Flowers, Guangdong

A lotus centre has been built in Sanshui, a city in South China's Guangdong Province. Occupying an area of 66.7 hectares, this lotus garden boasts some 300 varieties of lotus flowers, which represent the majority of the world's identified species. In two-thirds of the garden's total area, rare species of lotus flowers, including those of red, yellow, purple and blue in colour, are cultivated.

Sky Walk on Mount Hengshan, Hunan

Adil Hoshur, a sixth-generation Uyghur aerialist from Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, will perform a sky walk on Mount Hengshan in Hunan Province in the coming October.

Known as the "Prince of the Cable", Hoshur will traverse an iron cable 1,389 metres long, which will be fastened between two peaks of Hengshan, at a height of 436 metres.

Located in Hengyang prefecture in Central China's Hunan Province, Mount Hengshan, 1,290 metres, is one of China's Five Sacred Mountains. With 72 peaks and numerous scenic spots, it is a famous tourist destination. Hoshur is confident he will set a new world record by sky walking on Mount Hengshan.

Non-Stop Flight Services from Beijing and Shanghai to San Francisco

United Airlines has started two non-stop daily flights from China to San Francisco. One leaves Beijing at 4:30 p.m. (GMT 0830) and arrives in San Francisco at 12:55 p.m. local time (GMT 2055) the same day. The new flight saves customers four hours on this route. Previously, the flight had to stopover in Shanghai before continuing its journey. The second non-stop service is from Shanghai to San Francisco, which is also provided by United Airlines, according to reciprocal agreements signed between China and US aviation administrations.

Second Cloned Goat, Xi'an

Yangyang, the world's second cloned goat, was born at 8 p.m. on June 23 in Xi'an. It has been growing well under the care of scientists at the Northwest Agricultural and Forestry Science and Technology University in Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi Province.

The world's first cloned goat, Yuanyuan, died of a lung dysfunction a week before the birth of the second one. Cultivated from the same cell of an adult goat, Yangyang looks exactly the same as Yuanyuan, except that her bleats are clearer and more melodious than that of Yuanyuan, indicating that her lungs are functioning better than her elder sister's lungs did.

Great Wall Festival in Qinhuangdao, Hebei

Qinhuangdao, a coastal city in the Bohai Bay in Northern Hebei Province, is to hold the China 2000 International Great Wall Festival from August 26 to September 26.

A series of activities will be held during the festival, such as an exhibition of photos focused on the Great Wall, a beer festival and a large-scale performance of songs and dances. The festival will be staged on the Shanhaiguan Scenic Area.

The City is noted for its fortress, called Old Dragon Head, built by the sea, which marks the beginning of the Great Wall in the east. Shanhaiguan Pass, the first major pass on the Great Wall and a strategically important access point linking the Northeast to North China, is also located within the city.



The World's Highest Wooden Pagoda to Be Rescued, Shanxi

Standing 65.86 metres tall, the Buddhist pagoda in Yingxian, Shanxi, is the world's highest ancient wooden pagoda. This giant wooden structure was built 944 years ago during the Liao Dynasty. It is the most magnificent among the existing ancient buildings in China, and has been put under first-class state protection since the 1950s.

However, after standing for so many years in the wind and rain, and suffering several earthquakes and wars, the fragile pagoda has shown signs of collapsing. More than 100 breaks and cracks have been found in the twisted body of the pagoda, though its original magnificence still remains. The State Cultural Relics Bureau expressed that it is an urgent issue to renovate and rescue this priceless historical building and the government will do its best, whatever the cost. Specialists from various fields, including archaeology, geology and architecture, have worked out plans for the renovation.

Mao's Model Village Becomes Tourist Attraction

Under very difficult conditions, the farmers from Dazhai Village in Xiyang County, Shanxi Province, transformed their barren hilly land into terraced fields and yielded good harvests under the direction of Chairman Mao Zedong. The restructuring of the area during the 1960s was meant to set an example for other Chinese farmers to follow.

Now, the Dazhai people have caught up with the new trend in the era of reform and opening to the outside world. They have turned their village into a greenery resort to attract tourists. On their terraced fields where they once grew crops, they have planted trees of pine, cypress, peach and apricot, as well as grasses. Also, a hotel has been built and a travel agency established, employing 500 people.

The former farmers of Dazhai believe that the shift will not only make their village more attractive, but help improve ecological conditions. Dazhai has become one of the richest villages in Xiyang County, with a per capita income of more than 3,000 yuan last year.



Rebuilding of Chiang Kai-shek's Hometown, Zhejiang

A renovation project has started in Xikou, Zhejiang, hometown of Chiang Kai-shek.

The focus of the endeavour is Wuling Road. In old times a stream ran on one side of the street, and along the other side several points of historical interest stood, such as Wuling Gate, Fenggao Hall and Yutai Salt Shop. The authorities of the Xikou Scenic Area invited relevant experts to study the situation and, after a careful research, they decided to invest 15 million yuan to rebuild the street.

The renovated Wuling Road will be a 300-metre-long pedestrian street. While numerous existing old buildings will be maintained, many new ones will be added so as to restore the street to its original look during the late Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and early Republic period. Buildings that are not in the designated style of the street will be removed and old-style wine shops and teahouses, as well as a small theatre for local operas, will be constructed. The previous century's lively lifestyle is to prevail upon the newly restored street.

Ancient Tombs Excavated, Guangdong

More than 300 ancient tombs, dating back to the Qin Dynasty (221-207 B.C.), have been excavated in the Hengling Ridge in Boluo County, Guangdong. Archaeologists believe the find is evidence that civilisation in the area south of the Wuling Mountains existed more than 3,000 years ago.

Workers with the Guangdong Provincial Cultural Heritage and Archaeology Institute began the digging in July, 1999.

Sight Regained by 6,000 People

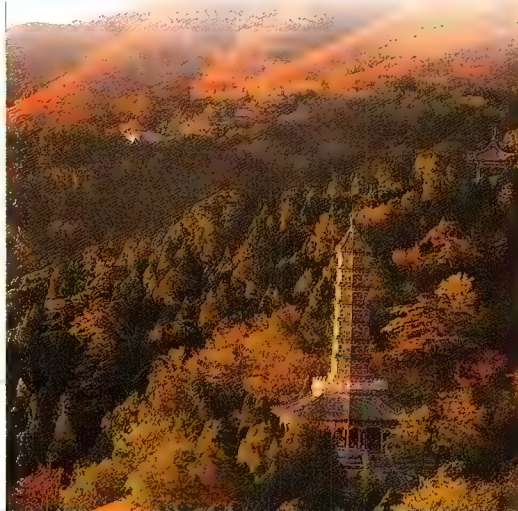
Hong Kong's mobile eye hospital, known as the Lifeline Express, has arrived in Yinchuan, capital of the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, to help more cataract patients regain their eyesight.

Previously, in their 83-day mission in Yibin, Sichuan Province, the medical team performed 1,000 successful cataract removal operations. Lifeline Express is made possible by donations from the people of Hong Kong. Its doctors, chosen from major Chinese hospitals, have helped 6,000 patients in poor inland provinces regain their sight.

Forest Tourism, Beijing

Beijing has constructed 15 forest parks and 350 forest scenic spots, including the West Hill Forest Park and the Badaling Forest Park, as well as the Songshan Mountain and Baihua Mountain nature reserves.

Statistics show that forest coverage has been expanded to encompass 36.26 percent of the capital's territory. Beijing began to promote forest tourism in 1992, and last year the municipality received 2 million visitors to its forests.





News

The Frequent Flyer Program Launched by Air China and Marriott International, Inc.

China On April 25, Air China and Marriott International Inc. signed a contract in Beijing making Marriott International Inc. an official partner of the Air China Frequent Flyer Program. Starting from May 1, members of the frequent flyer program will earn 800 km in air miles for every stay they take in a Marriott hotel in China. This offer is subject to the guests paying the standard corporate rates or higher. A mileage of 400 km can also be earned for every stay at the special Chinese citizen rate.

The largest airline in the country, Air China operates 49 international routes going to 95 cities of 21 countries around the world. They also supply a service on 86 domestic routes to all the major provincial capitals, key cities and tourist destinations across China.

The Air China Frequent Flyer Program is the first of its kind in China. And due to its excellent business model, it has been growing very rapidly in recent years. It now boasts a membership of around 150,000.

Washington-based Marriott International, Inc., one of the world's biggest hotel management groups, runs 19 hotels in China. Three new ventures will be opened this year in Beijing, Shanghai and Haikou, capital of Hainan Province.

Air China's Frequent Flyer Program was jointly launched by the two parties in the interests of world-wide business travellers in particular, thereby increasing the competitive edge of Air China.

To celebrate this co-operation, and to help kick start it's marketing, members of the Air China Frequent Flyer Program staying on fixed corporate rates or higher at the following hotels, can double their mileage, until July 31. The hotels where you can use this promotion are: Jingguang New World Beijing, Marriott Chongqing, China Hotel Guangzhou, Renaissance Harbour View Hong Kong, JW Marriott Hotel Hong Kong, Courtyard Kunming, Yangtze New World Shanghai and Courtyard New World Shunde

Hotel

Beijing New Century Hotel — an Ideal Business Stopover

Beijing



Standing proudly on Baishiqiao Road in Haidian District, Beijing, the Beijing New Century Hotel is one of the most distinguished hotels in the capital. To fulfil the demands of the increasing number of business travellers, this five-star hotel has recently modified its guestrooms on the 29th to 31st floors into business suites. All the rooms on these floors now offer a panorama of Beijing.

In order to create an ideal environment for both working and relaxing, these brand new suites are double the size of the original guestrooms.

New Century has equipped these suites with all kinds of new facilities, such as Internet access. They have even installed a stylish business lounge.

A range of exclusive services are provided to the business guests. Checking in and out can be performed directly on the executive floors, to save time and proffer convenience. The hotel also lays on breakfast, and free snacks and drinks are served constantly in the business lounge, where one can also read through a good selection of local and overseas newspapers. Guests are also entitled to use the meeting room in the business lounge and the fitness centre, free of charge.

Overall, the level of service proffered here by the efficient staff, together with the abundance of well thought-out facilities, makes the Beijing New Century a truly world-class hotel.

Shopping

Popular Souvenirs from Qingdao

Qingdao

A popular tourist destination, Qingdao has plenty to offer. For example, the Badaguan residential area is a showcase of buildings of some 20 kinds of architectural styles. Many great sights are dotted around the city, including the most popular Zhanqiao Pier and the Pavilion of Revolving Waves.

Many local products are loved by the visitors, but the real treat is the abundance of seafood. Dried shrimps, shrimp paste and shredded dry cuttlefish are the three easy-to-find treasures in this seaside city. A handicraft worth buying are the delightful miniature houses made of straw. Ranging from five to eight inches tall, these delicate hand-made creations are woven into all manner of shapes, anything from churches to even the White House. The smallest ones are as tiny as Christmas tree decorations. These "houses" are in fact small cases with the removable "roofs" as lids. They are priced from several yuan up to about 20 for a big one. You can find them at the Little Fish Hill Park.



Event

The 10th Qingdao International Beer Festival

Qingdao

Organised by Qingdao Municipal Government, this year's Qingdao International Beer Festival is scheduled to be held from August 26 to September 10, marking its 10th occurrence.

The event, which will take place in Qingdao International Beer City, consists of a series of activities, including the grand opening and closing ceremonies, evening shows, parades, cultural performance and, of course, beer sampling. At the same time, there will be an international fair of beverages, food and processing equipment, and the Qingdao Symposium for Investment and Development Strategy held in the coast city.



News

Cave of Scriptures Grabs the World's Attention Again

Dunhuang

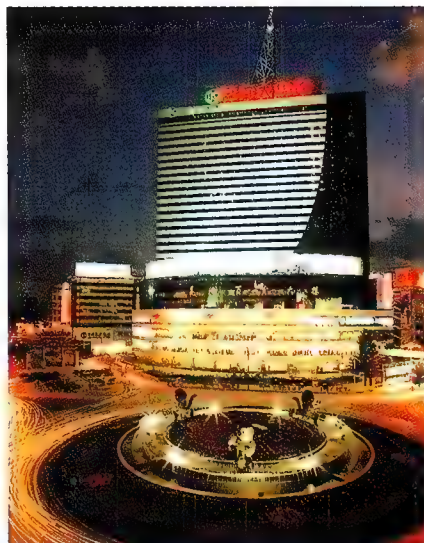
In June and July this year, a series of exhibitions and conferences were staged in Beijing and Gansu Province to mark the centenary since the discovery of the Cave of Scriptures at Dunhuang's Mogao Grottoes. Once again the cave drew attention from the world's academic and cultural circles.



The Cave of Scriptures, or Cave 17, was discovered accidentally by a monk in 1900, when cleaning away silt. His finding was something of a miracle as a total of 50,000 pieces of invaluable cultural artifacts were unearthed, including scriptures, religious instruments, embroideries and paintings, spanning the 4th to the 11th centuries. The relics serve as important witnesses to the cultural and religious development of ancient China and the cultural exchanges occurring between the East and the West at that time. They also shed light on the daily life of ordinary people. The discovery of the cave was a major event in Chinese and international academic circles, resulting in an entirely new worldwide discipline — Dunhuang Studies.

The aim of the activities being held in Beijing and Gansu is to highlight how far research has come and to raise the issue of cultural conservation, according to Zhang Tianli, deputy secretary-general of Gansu Provincial Government. It is hoped that the activities can make the history of China and Central Asia better understood in the rest of the world.

The Mogao Grottoes are found on the eastern side of Mingsha Mountain, 25 km southeast of Dunhuang. Construction of caves began in 366, and today, 492 caves still exist. They were placed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1987.



Hotel

New Era Hotel, Kunming

Kunming

Since its opening in September 1998, the four-star New Era Hotel in Kunming, Yunnan, has perhaps had more than its fair share of distinguished guests. The New Era has received many VIP and overseas guests and earned itself an excellent reputation in the process.

New Era Hotel, located in the heart of Kunming, enjoys easy access to all of the city's important social and business districts. Housed in a modern and imposing building, on Dongfeng Road, the New Era has become something of landmark of the city. It offers 320 well designed guestrooms and suites, all equipped with hi-tech facilities that one would expect and a few more besides. Its restaurants and bars serve both Chinese and Western cuisine, and enjoy a strong local clientele base, as well as a good mix of hotel guests. Solid business and convention facilities are just two of the hotel's numerable strong points.

This year, New Era Hotel Kunming was chosen as the news centre of the 1st Kunming International Travel Festival. It also accommodated all the world-wide artists participating the 2nd Kunming International Art Festival. Feedback on the hotel's many services was very positive from both events and the hotel is looking forward to seeing the guests again in the future.

Add: 99 Dongfeng Rd W, Kunming, Yunnan
Tel: (871) 3624999 Fax: (871) 3636556

Event

An Exposition of Nationalities Costumes

Kunming A most colourful event was recently staged in Kunming, capital of Yunnan Province, in which the miscellaneous cultures and costumes of China's 56 ethnic groups were displayed.

The first Chinese Nationalities Costume Exposition, jointly sponsored by the State Nationalities Affairs Commission and the Yunnan provincial government, was held July 2-9 in the 9,000-square-metre exhibition area of the Kunming International Trade Centre.

At its heart is the exhibition of thousands of ethnic costumes. Some exhibits dated as far back as the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Contributing to these priceless exhibits were the Shaanxi History Museum, Beijing Cultural Palace of Nationalities, Central Nationalities University Museum, China Nationalities Museum and the Beijing Costume College and others.



In addition to the exhibition, a series of interesting events were also arranged, including a traditional costume show at the opening ceremony, a competition featuring fashion design with ethnic colour, a modelling contest and a trade fair.

The event's objective is to help increase understanding between different ethnic groups of their ancestral cultures and promote the use of historic styles in fashion design.

Transport

Fuzhou-Wuyi Weekend Train Route in Operation

Fujian Direct access from Fuzhou to the Wuyi Mountain was made possible by the opening of the Hengnan Railway in 1999. Subsequently the mountain is welcoming more and more holiday-makers from Fuzhou. During the trial operation period last year, Fuzhou Railway Bureau arranged 25 trains on weekends to link the two spots. More than 140,000 passengers used this service and the reaction was very good.

After the success of the trial run, the way was paved for the Fuzhou-Wuyi weekend train route to be put formally into operation in April this year.

The trains run without making any stops en route. To further enhance the passengers' comfort, the train offers sleeper cars.



Scenic Spot

The Abundant Scenic Resorts in Guiyang

Guiyang The allure of green mountains, blue waters, spectacular limestone caves, magnificent waterfalls and diverse folklore have made Guiyang, capital of Guizhou Province, an increasingly popular holiday destination in Southwest China. Below are some of the highlights of its scenic resorts:

Hongfeng (Red Maple) Lake, a national resort 32 km from Guiyang, is one of the most renowned scenic spots in the area. The 57.2-square-kilometre lake, studded with about 190 islets, is the largest man-made lake on the Guizhou Plateau. To taste some customs of the ethnic people, visitors can head for the Miao, Dong or Buoyei villages in the resort to see pole-supported houses that shield the people from rain and storms, as well as drum towers and bridges.

Twenty-two km northwest of Guiyang is the 13.5-square-kilometre Baihua (Hundred-Flower) Lake. It is a paradise for birds such as the pond heron, mandarin duck, river gull, wild goose, and egret. On the banks of the lake, terraces, farmhouses and arched bridges form an idyllic scene.

Only 17 km south of downtown Guiyang is the large and natural Huaxi Park, the centrepiece of this scenic resort area. Along the meandering Huaxi River are pavilions, bridges, villas, shaded paths and green hills. Huaxi is home to more than 1,000 varieties of cultivated flowers which bloom year round.

Tianhe Pool Scenic Resort, 22 km southwest from the city, is a newly developed scenic spot. It features waterfalls, springs, deep pools, fantastic stones, natural bridges and mysterious limestone caves.

The 3,900-hectare Forest Park located in the southeastern part of the city is the earliest and largest urban forest park in China, and is home to some of the endangered trees under state protection. It is an ideal summer resort as the temperature is two degrees lower than the other parts of Guiyang in summer.



Jiuzhaigou

Executive Editor: Huang Yanhong

Published by: Hong Kong China Tourism Press

2000, 88 pages

Price: HK\$80 (US\$10)

The title of this Chinese-English bilingual book, "Jiuzhaigou", may be hard to pronounce for some Westerners, but it is one well worth mastering. It is the name of a place, literally meaning Nine-Village Valley, where a group of nature's wonders are gathered. Jiuzhaigou became a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1992 because of its incredible natural beauty.

Despite its strange name, the book, once opened, has fabulous pictures inside which will make you want to go to the valley yesterday. Eyes find it difficult to leave each page of vibrant colours. The photographs are excellent and this is really what makes the book worth purchasing. Even if you don't have a clue where Jiuzhaigou is, you won't care; you'll be happy just to admire its images.

The intense, gorgeous colours of the lakes in this area result from the layers of sometimes massive travertine (a pale limestone) deposits over which mineral-rich spring waters run. Though Jiuzhaigou was previously virtually unknown to outsiders, it will surely take its place among the natural wonders of the world as more people get the chance to visit it.

Jiuzhaigou is divided into sections of "Autumn", "Winter", "Water", "Travel in Jiuzhaigou" and "More Attractions of Aba". Most of the pictures, obviously the priority in this book, have brief descriptions of the sights within the Nine-Village Valley and its surrounding area. The pictures in the first three sections lack captions, whereas the latter two sections' captions greatly enhance the reader's knowledge of what is depicted. Spring and summer have been omitted from the book, which makes one wonder what the area is like during those seasons and whether or not it's worthwhile going there then.

Another UNESCO World Natural Heritage site near the Nine-Village Valley is featured in this book: Huanglong, or Yellow Dragon. It is easily feasible to include this site, which has thousands of ponds, waterfalls and

caves, with an excursion to Jiuzhaigou.

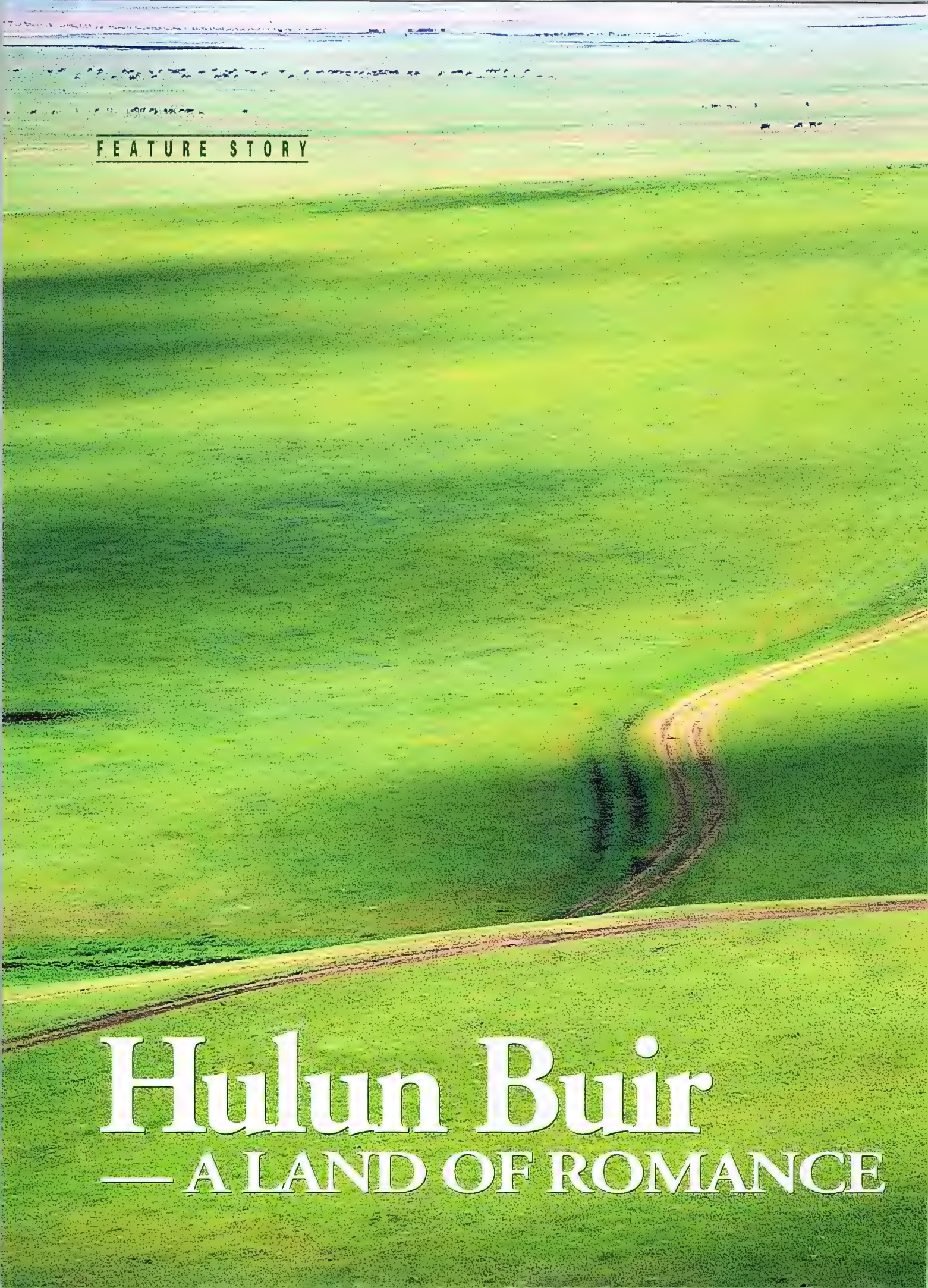
In addition to its picturesque photographs, *Jiuzhaigou* contains some good maps giving you an idea of just how much there is to see. Unfortunately for foreign

readers though, it does not start off with a map showing Jiuzhaigou's location in China. Also, the tips for transportation make the touring seem a little daunting to foreigners; it appears to be designed more for independent local travellers. It is doubtful that foreign visitors would go to such a remote place in any capacity other than an organised tour. If this book is truly meant to attract its foreign readers to visit Jiuzhaigou, then it would be helpful to list, in a language other than Chinese, some travel agencies that offer tours.

Overall, *Jiuzhaigou* fulfils its intention — that is to entice potential tourists to visit an area of exceptional beauty that is like no other on earth. *Jiuzhaigou* would also be a perfect memento of a trip to the book's namesake.

Reviewed by Patricia Hutton

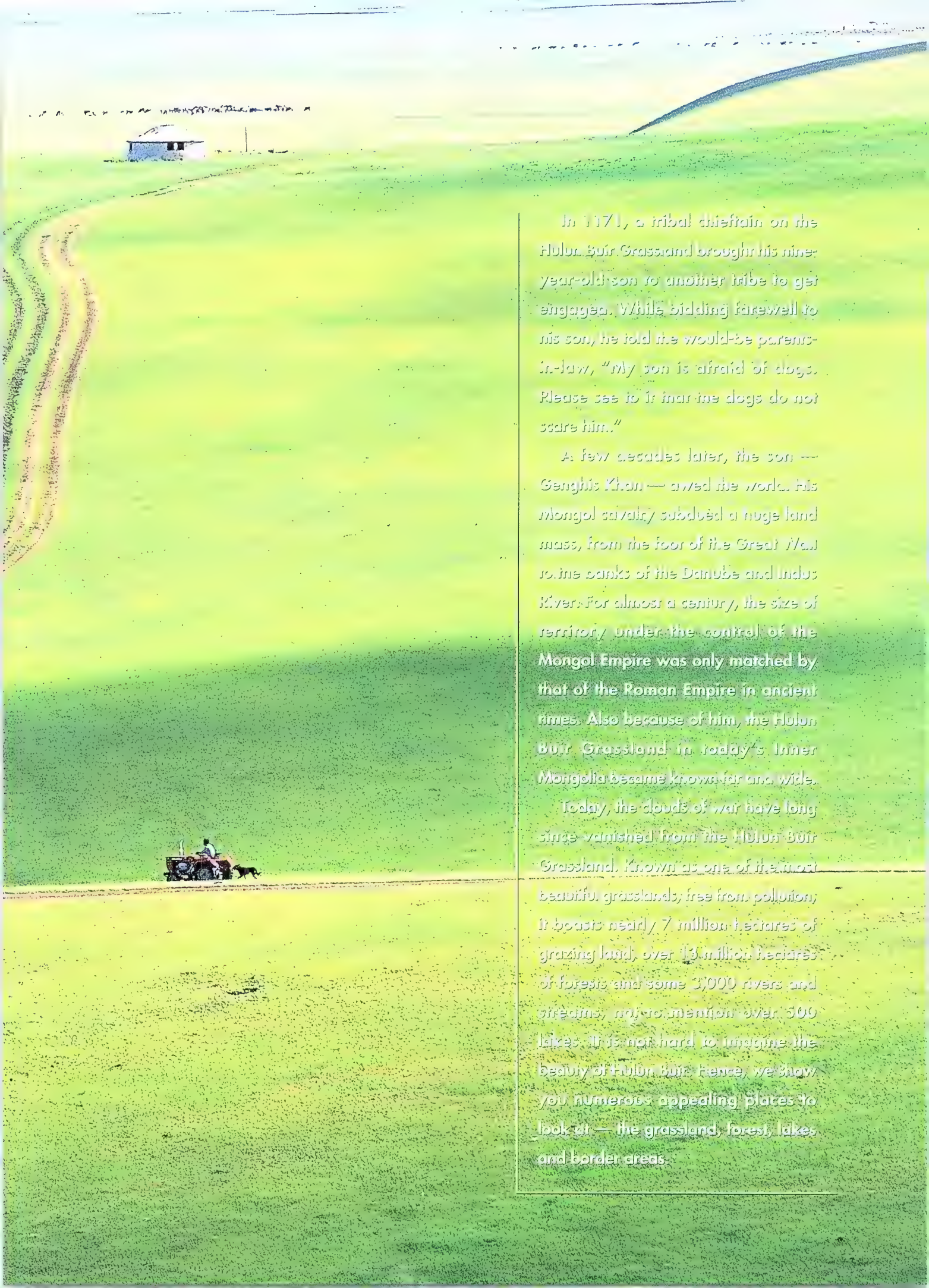


An aerial photograph of a vast, flat, green landscape, likely a grassland or tundra. A winding road or path is visible in the lower right, curving through the terrain. The horizon is visible in the distance under a pale sky.

FEATURE STORY

Hulun Buir

— A LAND OF ROMANCE



In 1171, a tribal chieftain on the Hulun Buir Grassland brought his nine-year-old son to another tribe to get engaged. While bidding farewell to his son, he told the would-be parents-in-law, "My son is afraid of dogs. Please see to it that the dogs do not scare him."

A few decades later, the son — Genghis Khan — owed the world his Mongol cavalry subdued a huge land mass, from the foot of the Great Wall to the banks of the Danube and Indus Rivers. For almost a century, the size of territory under the control of the Mongol Empire was only matched by that of the Roman Empire in ancient times. Also because of him, the Hulun Buir Grassland in today's Inner Mongolia became known far and wide.

Today, the clouds of war have long since vanished from the Hulun Buir Grassland. Known as one of the most beautiful grasslands, free from pollution, it boasts nearly 7 million hectares of grazing land, over 13 million hectares of forests and some 1,000 rivers and streams, not to mention over 500 lakes. It is not hard to imagine the beauty of Hulun Buir. Hence, we show you numerous appealing places to look at — the grassland, forest, lakes and border areas.



GRASSLAND TOUR

On the grassland is the city of Hailar, where the sun rises at 3 a.m., the charming Hob Nur Lake, the exciting Nadam festival and many other unique customs of the Mongolians. And, if you look closely, you might find the secret underground factory of the Japanese...

Thrills on the Hulun Buir Grassland

Photos & article by Si Yao

Previous page: In July, the grassland looks like a huge green carpet covering the ground.

1. The grassland viewed from the air (by Guan Zhaoyun)
2. The Genhe River winds through the grassland, bringing it vitality.

I had long imagined the visions of the boundless Hulun Buir Grassland: white clouds floating above in an azure sky, herds of cows and flocks of sheep grazing on the green land. When I actually saw it, however, I was still shocked by its alluring beauty and realised that it is no exaggeration to list Hulun Buir as one of the largest, the most beautiful and the most pollution-free grasslands in the world.

While flying from Beijing to Hailar, government seat of the Hulun Buir Prefecture, a local official in charge of the township enterprises told me stories about Hulun Buir. Two things he said deeply impressed me. One is



that the grass is of such good quality that it is exported overseas. The other is that a spicy wild leek sauce, an indispensable addition to boiled mutton, is made from the area's abundant supply.

Hailar, a city surrounded by grassland with a small population, has neatly arranged buildings. The city did not seem prosperous and to me was too quiet at night. I asked a hotel attendant when I should get up to take sunrise pictures. She said it would be between 2-3 a.m., and as I was new to the place, I missed it. By 4 a.m., when I went out, people were doing morning exercises and the morning fair was already getting rather crowded.

In early morning, the Hailar River, which flows quietly through the downtown area, is a paradise for anglers. Simply put your basin-like net into the water and scoop it out and you'll have the catch. At dusk, many people swim in the river.

Hailar also boasts the West Hill State Natural Forest Park. There is also a little known underground fortress that was built clandestinely by the invading Japanese army during World War II. Very strong and solid, the fortress can still hold thousands of people.

The grassland around Hailar is an ideal place to enjoy the area's charms. Baiyinhushuo, Hoh Nur and Jinzhanghan each offer something unique.



Nadam: Tradition Grew into an Annual Event

On the Hulun Buir Grassland, the Nadam is the most loved annual event. Traced back to Genghis Khan's time, it was then a song and dance gathering held after a victorious battle. Later, competitive activities, such as horse racing and wrestling, were added. Now, besides performances and competitions, the Nadam has also become a trade fair.



Luckily our group chanced upon the annual Nadam fair, which would run for several days in a row. This year, the fair was held on the grassland in Chen Barag Banner. A huge crowd of people, estimated at about 50,000, had already gathered there early on the first day. Many had arrived the day before too.

Around the major fairground people did different sorts of business and sold various local snacks, including boiled lamb and barbecued mutton. Numerous small stalls offered local goods or those from elsewhere in the

country. Moreover, there were horses for tourists to rent for a ride or having pictures taken in Mongolian clothes. The children were excited as they played a game to capture small gifts on the ground by throwing hoops over them.

The fair's grand opening started with a parade of people in traditional Mongolian attire, who walked around in a circle with some floats.

All the competitions are derived from Mongolian nomadic traditions characterised by a love of martial arts and worship of heroes. Young men who win these events would also win the hearts of the girls. No



dozen meticulously decorated horses shot out, with their young riders in colourful clothes. The race ran in four groups, over a distance of 2,000 metres. It was for individuals, not teams, and the winner was decided in a single race.

The proud wrestlers entered the ring in giant steps. They wore sleeveless leather jackets decorated with lines of shining metal buttons, and loose trousers with bright waistbands. There were both group and individual competitions. At this fair, there was also a wrestling competition for girls, but unfortunately, I could not stay to see it. Mongolian wrestling involves dozens of movements, including kicking, blocking, twisting and pulling. Usually, it takes more than 10 minutes before the winner is decided. The group competition is an exciting scene, as several pairs of wrestlers compete at the same time. The prize for the top winner is usually quite generous. In the past, it could be a horse or a cow. Now, it has been changed to a TV set or some other electronic goods.

The archery competitions were on horseback or standing still. In the standing one, the most popular, each man shot nine arrows in three stages and the one who hit the bull's-eye the most was the winner. More dramatic was the competition on horseback. They had to ride fast along the course while shooting at a target some 20 metres away.



wonder every competition was so fierce.

The first event, horse racing, was one of the three major programs. The Mongolians have long been known as "an ethnic group on horseback", hence, horse racing is a must in all recreational occasions and celebrations. To my surprise, however, all the riders were thin and young, with the youngest only seven years old. I learned later that the rider's weight would directly affect the horse's speed. From the starting gun, about a

1. The young rider far ahead in the race
2. Young wrestlers
3. Audience surrounding the competition ground
4. The opening ceremony of the Nadam
5. Model herdsmen were awarded at the fair.
6. A fierce game



Hoh Nur: The Landscape of Dreams

We made our way to the Hoh Nur Resort, where the staff were most hospitable. According to Mongolian tradition, we each had to drink a bowl of liquor on entering the village. It is rude to refuse. Among the crowd at the gate, genteel old men played two-stringed instruments with a scroll carved like a horse head. Two beautiful girls poured the liquor. As we hesitated, they sang, "Please drink a cup of Hulun Buir liquor; You are bound to feel the affection of the grassland. Please drink a cup of Hulun Buir liquor; Our friendship will last forever." So, as others did, I dipped my right middle finger in the bowl and flipped the liquor three times — one to heaven, one to earth and one for myself and the hosts.



1. After several rounds of running and chasing, the herdsman successfully caught the horse with his lasso.
2. A man making ceremonial sacrifice to the aobao
3. There is a ritual for serving the roast whole lamb.
4. Yurts are built by the blue lake.
5. Wolves locked in a cage
6. Trying the art of archery
7. The bonfire party for everyone

Then, we went up a slope, where a lake covering over 10 square kilometres came into view. Numerous sheep grazed the grassland by the lake. In the lake shallows, hundreds of horses moved around. In the thick reed groves, cranes and wild ducks roamed about. It reminded on me then that the word "nur" in Mongolian actually means "lake".

The holiday village is the most ideal place to enjoy the Hulun Buir landscape. A number of lele carts, which have basically disappeared in daily life, are kept there. Tourists can rent them with horses to experience a bit of the nomadic life. The village has 20 beautiful yurts; some serve as guest rooms while others are canteens. The largest one, the 500-square-metre "multi-function hall", is where traditional



Mongolian meals are served.

We were treated with a “whole-lamb” feast, including boiled lamb, fried mutton, stir-fried lamb tails and boiled lamb stomach. The roast whole lamb, the most delicious course, was brought out with a red silk ribbon around its neck to show respect to the guests. The host first cut small pieces from the head and offered them to the eldest member of our group. Then, he cut pieces from the loin and offered them to everyone. Finally he asked us to serve ourselves with small Mongolian knives. During the meal, we were toasted so many times that it was easy to get drunk.

Naturally, the grassland held the greatest appeal. We were indeed intoxicated by such lush greenery — we laid down and rolled over in the grass, lost in the thrill. Not far away, a crowd gathered to watch a horse lassoing show, which the local Mongolians often use to show off their equestrian skills. A large herd of horses galloped on the grassland and one was chosen. Usually, the chosen horse is the one most difficult to subdue and the man chosen to lasso it, on a specially trained horse, is the best local rider. This time, the rider almost lassooed the horse, but it suddenly turned and escaped back to the herd. This happened several times, until he finally succeeded in separating that horse from the others. In one quick movement, he cast the lasso around the horse’s neck; the horse jumped and kicked wildly, trying every means to get free. As the rope was tightened, other herdsmen entered the fray to overwhelm the horse. The action was so exciting that I almost forgot to take pictures.

The campfire party drew a wonderful conclusion to the day’s activities. A local theatrical troupe gave the first wonderful performance. Then, campfires were lit and the tourists danced in high spirits to the music. No one cared about his or her own dancing talent — everyone mixed and danced until the campfires went out.



Jinzhanghan: Valentine's Day on the Grassland

Jinzhanghan is a romantic place. The Mor Gol River snakes sensuously at the foot of the mountain. Over a straight distance of 150 km, the river winds over 1,000 km. Jinzhanghan was once greatly favoured by Genghis Khan, who camped and trained his troops there. It was from Jinzhanghan that Genghis Khan set out to unite the various tribes on the Hulun Buir Grassland.



1. One of the programmes for the Valentine's Day is worshipping the aobao.
2. An outdoor sculpture in Jinzhanghan
3. The Valentine's Day begins.
4. Lovers having their romantic dinner
5. An aobao is something holy for the Mongolian herdspeople.

Now, a "tribe" modelled after Genghis Khan's has been "re-established". At the sight of it, the "moving yurt" invented by Genghis Khan, pulled by dozens of horses over the grassland, would come to mind immediately. The chieftain of this "tribe" is a Daur man with long hair and beard, called Old Er. He has launched many innovative tourist programmes, including the Valentine's Day on the Grassland. No one in Hulun Buir had ever heard of Valentine's Day before.

We arrived before the activities had started. However, many couples had come and were already enjoying the wonderful environment. Suddenly, a rainbow appeared and everyone rushed to higher ground, overjoyed at the sight of it.

The first ritual of the day was to offer sacrifices to the aobao, a decorated pile of rocks, which was first used by the Mongolians as a marker and gradually evolved into a spiritual symbol. The aobao is set at the highest point of a hill. The procession was led by Hasi Bate, a much respected elderly. More than 30 couples followed a group of young Mongolian girls carrying sacrificial objects. Approaching the aobao, each couple was first given a bowl of liquor and asked to dip in the middle finger on their right hand and flip it to the sky and earth, a symbolic gesture to show that their love would last eternally. Then, they were instructed to light incense sticks and tie a silk red ribbon on a rock and throw it on top of the aobao while quietly expressing a

wish. Finally, they had to think about their wish while walking around the aobao three times.

The antiphonal singing by the aobao was very interesting. The young people were separated into two lines to sing in turn the widely known song *Meeting the Sweetheart by the Aobao* — a song originally from the Hulun Buir Grassland. Interestingly, when the young men sang the line “My sweetheart, come to me quickly”, the girls were too shy to move. In the end, the young men ran to them instead.

Next came a tug-of-war. To be fair, the girls stood on the lower side of the slope and the men, the upper side. The host joked that modern men often stay away from home and it was necessary for the women folks to pull them back. Sure enough, the women laboured very hard, and with their advantage, they quickly succeeded.

The happiest scene, though, was witnessed at the lovers’ dinner. Candles were lit over a dozen tables in a large tent. First, the lovers toasted each other, then a group of girls toasted the lovers in turn, while singing love songs. Romance filled the air, along with the warm fragrance of liquor. The fun continued late into the night after a campfire party.



FOREST TOUR

At Yakeshi, the boundary between the forest and grassland, you can go fishing or take a train to travel through lush greenery and the beautiful Jiliu River. The air is wonderfully fresh, providing all the vital elements for people to enjoy long life.

Entering Aoluguya

Photos & article by Huang Yanhong

Yakeshi, the first stop on this forest tour, is the boundary of the forest and grassland. The Greater Hinggan Mountains and Hulun Buir Grassland join here, with grasslands and rivers on one side and forests and mountains on the other. I stayed in the Phoenix Mountain Villa in picturesque surroundings.

Looking out of the window, I remembered my friend had said that the floating mist on a fine morning was very beautiful here. My imagination took over that night: In the morning glow, a red mist curled up from the winding river of Zhadun and gradually floated towards Phoenix Mountain. A European-style wooden house on the mountain seemed to be drifting in a fairyland... but, sadly, the next morning, I stood on the balcony, only to find drizzle.

There was no hope for taking pictures, nor could I go back to sleep, so I got a fishing rod and called my friend to go fishing. When we arrived, two men, looking very professional, were already fishing by the river.

I asked them how to dig for worms and how to fix the float on the line. With an unhappy worm attached, I threw in my line. My luck soon came and I caught a small catfish. Later I used two hooks on one line, and caught two fish at one time. This also surprised my "coach". At breakfast, a delicious plate of fried fish — my catch — was served.





It was a four-hour trip by train from Yakeshi to Genhe, at a fare of only 16 yuan. On the train, I found unexpected pleasure as we passed through the lush greenness of the Greater Hinggan Mountains.

Most of the many passengers were noisy students. I chose to sit at the back of the train, hoping to see the “long green dragon” as the train zigzagged. When we slowed down on a slope, the broad expanse of green grassland came into view. The scenes continued to be picturesque, but changed from time to time. The grass swayed in the wind like waves in the sea. Small stations dotting the forest area were simple, yet also impressive. Tiredness didn’t affect me as it usually does on trains. Sometimes I watched the passengers carrying parcels and baskets up and down the train. I opened the window to chat with peddlers and buy their mountain fruits.

When the train passed through the birch trees, they seemed so close that I could touch them. The trains’ speed turned their trunks into a white blur and the strong wind it caused shook the whole grove. Leaves flapped in the wind like chords in a concert. Suddenly music came to my mind and I realised it was a Russian song depicting the elegant birches. I hummed away to my heart’s content.

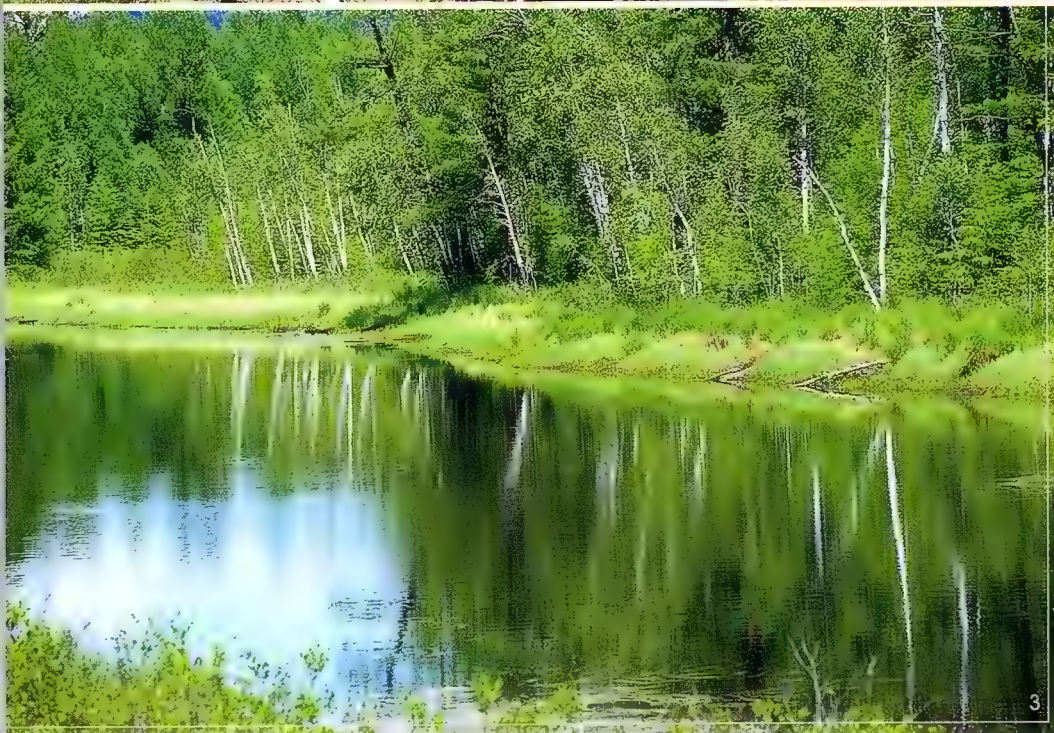


I finally arrived in Aoluguya, the northernmost township in Inner Mongolia. Here live the most distant and mysterious branch of the Ewenki ethnic group, also known as Yakute. It was not until 1957 that this branch merged with other two tribes to form the present day Ewenki.

At dusk, we were surprised to see rows of wooden houses. Did this mean that these forest tribes had settled down to a new type of life? We met the township head, Mr. Gu Xinjun, who is in his 30s. He took us on a tour of the township. Mr. Gu also has a Russian name — Shelusa Gu. He said that almost everyone there has a Russian name. People who have the same name would add something to distinguish themselves, such as “big”, “middle” or “small”.

1. Jiliu River in dusk
2. Woods in Mordaga bathed in the morning rays (by Liu Zhaoming)
3. Entering a reindeer centre





entering an oxygen chamber. The local people said it was so fresh you could not resist inhaling. It was certainly a relief from the polluted air of my home, Hong Kong. I greedily inhaled as if my polluted lungs were being washed again and again. I stretched my arms and totally enjoyed this comfortable "treatment".

To take some photos, I stepped onto a single log bridge to cross the river. Suddenly my camera slipped off my shoulder. In trying to catch the camera I lost my balance and fell into the river. Luckily, the water was shallow and I was able to hold the borrowed camera up above the water. I got up and immediately ran to the

We were invited to have dinner with Mr. Gu after our tour. The sumptuous dinner included venison. I hesitated to eat it but Mr. Gu told us the Ewenkis are the only people who are permitted to hunt deer. He also said, "We don't have pollution here. The meat is of good quality and very clean."

Mr. Gu is a straightforward man and likes to drink. When he was half drunk, he began to sing very loudly in a coarse voice. I said that he sounded like a Hong Kong pop singer. Mr. Gu was so happy that he sang another song, *The Serenade of Aoluguya*, but I only remember a few lines:

The wind of my hometown, you are the beacon in my heart.

The wind of my hometown, you have given me a sweet dream....



The sweet dream came true for me. Here in Aoluguya we saw the scenes that we could not see in Yakeshi. I got up very early the next morning and walked with my friend towards the Jiliu River. I trampled through grassland full of dewdrops and left behind a dark green track. The air was so fresh in the woods by the river that it seemed to me like

Reindeer



Although the reindeer belongs to the deer family, its appearance differs from other deer in four ways. It has a head that somewhat resembles a horse's, antlers like a deer's, a body that is somewhat like a donkey's, and hooves that resemble an ox's. There are white, grey and spotted reindeer.

The Ewenkis in Aoluguya used to raise the reindeer only for transport. A reindeer can take a load of 35 kg and walk five km per hour. Now the 1,000 reindeer raised in Aoluguya have also become one of the main economic resources of the local people.

Both sexes of reindeer grow antlers that are highly prized for their medicinal value. The antlers are cut off once a year and each kilogram is sold for about 1,000 yuan. If the antler is not cut at the right time, it loses its medicinal effect. The first successful cutting of antlers took place in 1964.

Tour Route: Take a train or bus from Hailar to Genhe where there are many forests and a small tourist train. If you have time, you can spend two days going west to the famous Mordaga, where the forest scenery is spectacular. It is more convenient to hire a car at Genhe or Mangui to Aoluguya. You may take the train from Mangui directly back to Yakeshi to visit the Phoenix Mountain Villa and then back to Hailar.

sandbar in the middle of the river. I used the clothes that were still dry to wipe the splashes off the camera. Checking that there was nobody nearby, I took off my wet clothes, wrung them out and spread them on the rocks. The morning wind was cool and made me shiver. My friend, trying hard to suppress his amusement, came to help. As I sang an old advertising jingle, "a frog falls into the water", he broke out in great laughter.



After we had a long laugh, I turned to examine my own cameras. One camera and two lenses were out of order, and the only one I could use had a wide-angle lens. I was so sad about it that I had no appetite at breakfast.

Afterwards we went to visit the hunters' homes with Mr. Gu.

The government has built houses and installed telephones for the 167 Ewenkis in Aoluguya Township. But since the reindeer move about in the forests, most of the Ewenkis still lodge in the five reindeer centres in the forests. The farthest one is 150 km away, but most of the hunters live very close to the road, for convenience. We went to the nearest, about 60 km from the town.

One of Mr. Gu's main tasks is to keep in contact with all the hunters' settlements. In our car we carried daily necessities and cases of beer for the hunters. It took about an hour and a half to get there. To me, the surrounding area where we stopped had no distinguishing markers, but Mr. Gu knew exactly where to go. He led us to a small path in the woods. When the path ended, we had to step carefully on the grass and tree roots or branches at the side of the swamp to avoid sinking into it.

Twenty minutes later, we saw a few grey tents set up amid the trees and a herd of reindeer milling about. It was a fairy tale picture. Mr. Gu remarked that long ago the hunters used to live in cone tents, called "fairy pillars" by the locals, but they are seldom seen now.

We approached one tent, where an old woman smiled at us. I could not talk to this woman named Maria Bu, Mr. Gu's 90-year-old grandmother, because she speaks no Mandarin at all. Gu told me that his family asks her to stay at home but she is not accustomed to a settled life. Except in the few coldest months in winter,

she prefers to live in the forest. Mr. Gu said that his grandmother is still quite healthy and can walk for two hours without gasping. Once a TV journalist team came to interview her and they had trouble catching up to her while she was walking.

The old woman said a few words to Mr. Gu and walked towards the reindeer. She got a handful of something from a leather bag hanging at her waist. The reindeer suddenly became excited and the bells on their necks rang. That handful of salt is one of the measures that keeps the

reindeer from wandering off. Though the men now do very little hunting and also stay in the forest to mind the reindeer, it seems that only the women carry the salt bags. Distributing the salt has always been a job for the women.

The about 100 reindeer all rested around a fire. Wet tree leaves were put over the fire to create smoke to drive away the mosquitoes.

The food of the reindeer, the moss growing in this area, needs a very clean environment to grow in, and even a little pollution would kill it. Thus, environmental protection here is a very important concern of the local people.



1. At the reindeer centres, people seem to be living a camping life.
2. Moving the reindeer herd to a new site
3. In the quiet morning
4. The 90-year-old Maria Bu
5. Houses built for the Ewenkis in Aoluguya Township
6. The attractive Moon Bay in Mangui



LAKE TOUR | *There were all kinds of peculiar experiences on this trip: the crowded bus going to the nature reserve of Ulanpao; catching a ride on a truck carrying a load of fish; and a night stay that cost only six yuan.*

Looking for Hulun and Buir Photos & article by Yan Hong

The local people say that one wouldn't really know Hulun Buir until he or she has visited the two lakes of Hulun and Buir. So, after studying the routes, I got on my way to Buir Lake.

Buir Lake, lying in Xin Barag Zuoqi (Left Banner), also called Xiqi or West Banner, is a border lake of China and Mongolia. Hulun Lake, in Manzhouli, is the fifth largest lake in China. A river named Orxon Gol connects the two lakes, and between them there is a section of wet land called Ulanpao, which is a famous bird reserve.



I got up very early to get the long-distance bus from Hailar to Manzhouli. The road was in good condition and the scenery along it was beautiful. It had rained for several days, relieving the drought, and the grassland was all a vibrant green. At noon, I arrived at Manzhouli, where I had to change to a bus to Xiqi. During the half-hour wait I went to find something to eat.

Over 30 passengers were squeezed into the minibus, which had only a dozen seats. The road was not good and our bus rocked to the sound of sharp cracks in the surface. Several sections of the road had been



washed out by heavy rain, so the bus rolled over the wet and slippery grass. Fortunately the driver was very skilled. Several times he got the bus out of the mud before we got really stuck.

At a small village called Burtun, more people squeezed into the bus. I admired these people because no one complained at all. They even tried to let more people in. The conductor, a woman in her 30s, gave her seat to others and stood in the crowd herself. I asked her why they didn't add more buses. She said that all the 20 buses were running on this route on contract. But the bus company limited their dispatch, with every bus having a turn only once every four days, to avoid them contending for passengers.



The bus arrived at Xiqi at 4 p.m., and as I was about to look for a place to stay, a truck going to Ulanpao appeared. I decided to go to see this famous wetland and jumped

on. The rain started again; raindrops hit the windows hard while the truck's wheels sprayed water up onto the windshield. There was mud everywhere and the road was invisible. The two ruts on the grassland indicated the direction, and drivers often make their own road.

We arrived at Ulanpao before dark. The lake is full of reeds and freshwater-weeds. In the heavy rain, the truck stopped in front of a house. A man, whom I later learned to be Mr. Tong, opened the door. I immediately explained: I was a tourist from Hong Kong and wanted to stay for the night. Once inside, the man offered me a cup of hot tea. This is a small station of Hulun Lake Nature Reserve and there are only two or three staff members. The heavy rain prevented me from going out that evening, so I chatted with Mr. Tong about the birds.

The rain stopped, so after daybreak the next morning, Mr. Tong led me to the lake where he said I could take good photos of thousands of birds flying, which only happens in the morning. The sound of many birds came out from among the dense reed marshes. Whispering, Mr. Tong pointed out the heron that just flew away and the mallard going into the reeds.

A small bridge to the opposite bank had been washed away. After checking the depth with my tripod and finding it shallow, I started to take off my shoes to cross the river. But Mr. Tong stopped me, saying that the riverbed was rocky. So I rolled up my trousers and carefully crossed.

It was still quite dark, so I could not see the birds very clearly. As I crouched and moved closer, the birds flew further away! Groups of seagulls and grey cranes flew into the distance. I waited quietly until I could get a better sight. Unfortunately, as the sun's ray shone through the thick clouds, the birds finished up their "morning exercises" and rapidly left. I walked back in soggy shoes, a bit disappointed.

Later, we had a simple breakfast typical for rural unmarried men here — boiled plain flour dumplings with condiments to add some taste.



With the birds gone, I decided to visit the people in the township of Aorigegecha, in the central area of the Hulun Lake Nature Reserve. It has only 11 families. As we entered the home of Uliji, we were immediately



1. Sheep resting by the Buir Lake
2. A herd of horses taking a bath in the lake
3. Fishermen getting their catch early in the morning





offered cheese, which had patterns pressed on top. Mr. Tong had stayed with Uliji for over a year when the reserve station started up, as there were no lodgings elsewhere.

Uliji, who seemed over 40, is a capable man. He raises cows and sheep, and also bought a windmill generator that cost him 2,000 yuan, answering his family's basic electricity needs. Mr. Tong pays Uliji a monthly fee to look after his young calf, a prudent investment that would later bring him good money.

In a small Buddhist hall, we met the 86-year-old Sangbu, a lama who sometimes performs religious services outside the area. Religious instruments and small Buddha images sit on an altar table inside the five-square-metre hall. Sangbu agreed to my taking photos and continued to do his own things, ignoring us. I asked if he would mind changing into his formal lama robe for pictures, and very congenially, he agreed, put on his boots, walked home and came back some time later in a totally different robe.

I tried to hitchhike to Buir Lake, but after two hours not a single car had passed. Thinking I could save time, I suggested walking to Baogede Ula Sumu, another township, and finding transportation there. Mr. Tong warned against it, saying there were wolves on the grassland. He had seen wolves several times; once two wolves were eating a sheep only 10 metres from his doorstep. So, we went to a small grocery whose owner was also Mr. Tong's friend. When he heard that I wanted to go to Sumu, he immediately agreed to take me on his field tractor. He said he needed to buy some goods there. I sat on boxes of empty beer bottles, and we soon covered the 15 km. I offered him 20 yuan for the ride, but he refused, saying that he needed to come anyway.



We were not so lucky with the people in Baogede Ula Sumu. Because of the heavy rain, buses were cancelled and so, I had to rent a car. Most drivers asked for 400 yuan, but I finally found a jeep for 300 yuan.

The road to Buir Lake was terrible. We were driving mostly in the mud. Along the way we saw several cars struggling. My driver was afraid of getting stuck as well, so he ignored their requests for help. On such a slippery way sensible drivers don't dare stop. About an hour and half later, we arrived at the hostel at Buir Lake. The rooms at the hostel were dirty, but I had to make do with it.

Buir Lake sits on the border between China and Mongolia, with four-fifths of it in Mongolia. In the darkness I could hardly see anything on the opposite side of this large lake. The lake has an abundant supply of fish and 12 "fish stations" had been set up along 12 km of the shore. The fishermen fix round tank-like nets, one or two metres in diameter, to lure the fish in and raise them, and then use square tanks to ship the fish out.

Not very far from the lake, there is a long row of barbed wire that indicates the border. While I was wondering why there were so few cattle and sheep on such a vast pasture, a big flock of sheep that belonged to an outsider came into sight. This farsighted businessman had invested 100,000 yuan and hired a local herdsman, with a pay of 600 yuan a month, to take care of his sheep. In one year the herd had doubled in size.



Buir Lake is not very famous, but it had an important position in history. The last emperor of Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), founded by the Mongols, fled with his defeated troops to Hulun Buir, the place of origin of the Mongolian ethnic group. However, Zhu Yuanzhang, the founder of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), ordered his army to chase the Yuan emperor to the banks of Buir Lake.

During World War II, the Soviet army fought the Japanese invaders fiercely at Nurmenhan on the Mongolian side. One big airplane battle was fought over Buir Lake, and many airplanes were downed in the lake. The die-hard Japanese pilots often tried to crash their planes into Russian planes after they had been hit. These plane wrecks are still buried at the bottom of the lake.

Now it is birds, not planes, that fly over Buir Lake. On my second day, I got up early to go to the lake, where the grey cranes were the largest in number. The cranes were perching gracefully on the net poles. In the strong wind, they had to balance themselves with their wings like acrobats walking on a wire. They stood waiting for fish and were usually rewarded. This is why the locals called them "stubborn waiting birds".

I had a chat with the locals, and soon I found someone who helped me find a jeep to visit the Sino-Mongolian border at Orxun Gol River, where the border army is stationed.


A soldier accompanied me to the highland border post, from where I clearly saw an expanse of grassland,

the buffer zone, between two rows of barbed wires. The young soldier looked very tired. I learned that he had set up an ambush by the lake on the previous night because so many people try to cross the border to fish there.



Again, with no scheduled buses, organising transport was a headache. In the end I hitchhiked on a truck carrying fish. It was not an ideal situation, getting into a stranger's truck while most of the travelling time would be at night. Over the large expanse of grassland, I could see nothing except the horizon. Hares ran with our truck as if it was a contest. Then, as if on a suicide mission, birds flew into our headlights with a loud bang and dropped onto the ground. How sad it was!

At 3 a.m., we arrived at the South Mountain Mine of Jalai Nur. I got off the truck to find a public bath house by the roadside which was still brightly lit. The bath was not bad and the rate was unbelievably cheap. A sauna bath plus a bed cost only 6 yuan. After my sound sleep, I went looking for my final destination — Hulun Lake. It didn't look far on the map, but transport was still a nuisance. I changed bus several times and finally got there by taxi. Later I learned it would have been easier to join a tour.

Hulun Lake is very big, covering an area of 2,300 square kilometres. With beaches and tides, it is hard to tell if it is a lake or the sea. This is probably why the lake is named Hulun Nur, which means Sea-Like Lake in Mongolian. The lake water is as blue as the sky. Some tourist facilities have been established at the lake, but organised tours fail to attract the tourists who preferred to see other natural scenes. Independent travellers can make their own tour around the lake, or go sailing to visit the villages. 

Route suggestion: Start from Hailar and first go to Hoh Nur, a 12-square-kilometre lake with good scenes. Continue by bus to Manzhouli and then change bus to Xiqi. If you omit Ulanpao, you can take a scheduled bus to Buir Sumu (one bus every day). Buir Sumu is about 40 km from Buir Lake and there is no regular bus. To go to Ulanpao, the only choice is to hitchhike to Baogede Ula Sumu and then change bus to get to Ulanpao. To get to Hulun Lake from Manzhouli, take the scheduled tourist bus leaving at 7:30 a.m. and returning in the afternoon. From Manzhouli, you may hitchhike to a Sino-Russian border lake — Erzi Lake. There is a holiday village amid the beautiful scenery there. It takes about 40 minutes to get there.

1. A herdsman on the Buir Grassland
2. Horses for the Nadam horse races are under careful protection.
3. At the entrance of a tourist area on the Hulun Lake
4. Morning on the Qinghu Lake



A TOUR ON THE SINO-RUSSIAN BORDER | *The other side of the border has a few surprises — beer-drinking fishermen and bikini-clad sun bathers. On the Chinese side, descendants of Russian-Chinese marriages live in their Russian-style log houses.*

Boating on Ergun River

Photos & article by Suolang Zhaxi



A river quietly flows along, making a big curve in the shape of a bent figure of a man, which gave rise to the river's name Ergun, meaning "resenting sacrifices". This was where the ancestors of the Mongols lived and also the site where Genghis Khan rested for his final attack to enter the Central Plains. In 1689, China and Russia named it as the border river between the two countries.

I joined a tourist group and went to the pier at Heishantou, where the boat that tours on the border river starts off. Now there are no traces of the above history on the river banks. The water was a clear blue, warm and gentle. We had a good lunch of barbecued meat and beer by the river before boarding.

Looking at the Other Side

The boat made a tour in the harbour and moved off into the main navigation route. I could see the barbed wire on the slope on the Russian side and some soldiers on duty. Years ago, relations between China and the former Soviet Union deteriorated, this area had been at the forefront of hostility.

The slowly-flowing Ergun River has many bends. I saw no people on the Chinese side at all, only flocks of birds. It was difficult to distinguish between the river and the wide reed marsh. Water birds flapped around the marsh. Hunting is not allowed in this border region, and so it has become a paradise for birds.

I was more interested in the scenes on the other side of the river. The first village we passed was Old Chuluhaitu, which had very simple, small houses dotting the mountain slope. Obviously the living standards are not as good as on the other side. There was a vast pasture for the herds of cattle and sheep. Some robust men had just arrived. Getting off their old motorbikes, they began fishing, each holding a fishing pole in one hand and a bottle of beer in the other. What I saw proved what I had heard — Russians are really famous for their love of drinking. Some bold boys even swam out to our boat to ask for beer. After taking the bottles of beer thrown from the ship, they swam back to their side. A few Russian girls in bikinis were sun bathing, oblivious to their audience.

Our ship returned to the pier an hour later.



A Family of Russian Descendants

About 100 years ago, a large number of labourers from the Chinese inland came here to build the Far East Railway. Many married migrant Russian girls. Now their partly-Russian descendants have lived here for four or five generations, mainly in the towns of Enhe, Budalin and Sanhe.



We visited one such family in Budalin. The 67-year-old woman, Mrs. Chen, lives here in a white house. Her father was Chinese and her mother Russian. Her big house with a living room on the second floor is furnished in Russian style. The candleholders on the table and the decorative paintings on the walls are all antique. In the 100-square-metre backyard garden, Mrs. Chen grows various kinds of vegetables. Her sons and daughters have all moved to Australia and visit her once a

year. She prefers to stay in her own old place, though alone.

We had a sumptuous dinner in her backyard. To welcome guests from afar, Mrs. Chen's relatives and friends all came to help. The vegetables were from her garden. There were all kinds of home-made cakes and pastries, such as cream cake, fried small cake and fried doughnuts. There were even specially prepared Easter eggs. People normally have these foods only at the local festivals. The Chen family has always been famous baker of bread and Russians would usually buy some to take home when they came to visit their relatives or friends.

During the meal, Mrs. Chen rose and invited us to dance. The song, *Evening in the Suburban Moscow*, played on an accordion, reminded us of the past.

Strolling in Manzhouli

I decided to visit Manzhouli on my own to have more free time. I first went to see the Border Gate. An arched framework with a large national emblem is over the rail line. Opposite to the Chinese border gate is a Russian one with the letters "CCCP" of the former Soviet Union still visible. On the other side is the Russian city Zabajal'sk.

In Manzhouli, you may see and feel the rich Russian flavour everywhere. I went to a restaurant named Moscow Western Restaurant. Knowing that I wanted to take photos, the manager of the restaurant suggested I come in the evening, after 9 p.m. when it would be livelier. He was right, in fact there were still customers in the restaurant at 4 a.m. These



1. Cruising on the border river
2. Young Russian women in Manzhouli
3. The small town on the Russian side of the border
4. The dinner table laid in the backyard of Mrs. Chen



1. The newly built Wangquan Market in Manzhouli
2. Children in front of an old Russian-style house
3. Russians often come to buy daily utilities.
4. Sculptures at the Ewenki Museum
5. Herdspeople on their way to the Nadam Fair
6. The Aoluguya Forest
7. Hailar at night

Chinese goods, they also brought Russian goods such as binoculars, cameras and handicrafts to sell. The largest market is the Sino-Russian Border Trade Area in Manzhouli, covering 120,000 square metres. It is visited by large numbers of Russian business people and tourists every day.



Translated by M.Q. and Z.G. Li

business people from Russia sang and danced till morning. Seeing my camera, they were quiet co-operative and invited me to drink and dance with them.

The city is proud of its Russian-style buildings, which are best preserved in its northern district and the streets of No. 1 to No. 3 in the southern district. These century-old log cabins have become highlights of the city. They are made of raw logs, with the original grain and colour retained. I randomly knocked on the door of a log cabin and asked the old couple living there if I could have a look around. They were very hospitable. The house was quite big inside with simple furniture. Later I lodged in a log cabin hotel. The rate was very cheap, only 20 yuan per bed, but the room was very crowded with too many beds.

There are some large markets in the city, which the Russians flocked to. Besides buying



TIPS FOR THE TRAVELLER

Organised Tours

Grassland Landscape and Sino-Russian Border Tour

- Day 1 : Sightseeing in downtown Hailar and a visit to the Xishan (West Hill) State Natural Forest Park.
- Day 2 : Take a bus tour on the grassland: ride horses and camels, tour around on a lele cart, take pictures of yourself in Mongolian attire, visit an aobao and herders' families, watch wrestling, horse lassoing and horse training, taste a unique Mongolian dinner, enjoy Mongolian singing and dancing as well as participate in a campfire party, and stay the night in Mongolian yurts.
- Day 3 : Take a bus to Manzhouli for a sightseeing tour in the city and visit the Sino-Russian trade market, the border posts and mutual trade zone.
- Day 4 : Take a bus to the Hulun Nur Tourist Area where you can take a boat tour of the lake or fish. At a restaurant by the lake, you can have an "all-fish banquet" at noon, and return to Hailar in the afternoon.
- Day 5 : Shop before taking T212 Tourist Train out of Hailar.

Hulun Buir Grassland Landscape Tour

- Day 1 : Sightseeing in downtown Hailar and visiting the Xishan State Natural Forest Park.
- Day 2 : Take a bus to Hoh Nur in the morning to ride horses and camels, ride in a lele cart, take pictures of yourself in Mongolian attire, visit an aobao and herders' families for an experience of the nomadic life, have a meal of unique Mongolian food, watch performances of Mongolian singing and dancing, participate in a campfire party, and stay the night in Mongolian yurts.
- Day 3 : Take a bus back to Hailar to visit the underground fortress, built by the Japanese, at Beishan (Northern Hill), tour the Shengli (Victory) Square and visit the local produce museum. Leave Hailar in the evening.

Hulun Buir Ice-Snow Landscape Tour

- Day 1 : Take a sightseeing tour in downtown Hailar and visit the Xishan State Natural Forest Park.
- Day 2 : Take a bus to Chen Barag Banner grassland to visit an aobao and herders' families, enjoy the snowy landscape on the grassland, go skiing or have a ride in sledges pulled by horses or camels over the snow-covered grassland, have a meal of unique Mongolian food, watch performances of Mongolian singing and dancing, ride camels, play in the snow and join some of the sporting activities. Stay overnight in Mongolian yurts.
- Day 3 : Return to Hailar in the morning to visit the Beishan underground fortress. Leave Hailar in the evening.

Grassland-Fenghuang (Phoenix) Hill Forest Holiday Tour

- Day 1 : Go sightseeing in downtown Hailar and tour the grassland by bus: to ride horses and camels and go around in a lele cart, have pictures taken in Mongolian clothes, pay visits to an aobao and herders' families, watch performances of wrestling as well as horse looping and training, have a meal of unique Mongolian food and drink from toasts of Mongolian girls, watch performances of Mongolian singing and dancing, and participate in a campfire party. Take a bus back to Hailar.
- Day 2 : Take a bus to the Fenghuang Hill Holiday Villa in Yakeshi City. You can enjoy the natural scenery on the way. After lunch, have a walk in the forest or ride a horse, fish or try target shooting. Stay overnight in the Fenghuang Hill Villa.
- Day 3 : Take a bus back to Hailar in the morning to tour the Xishan State Natural Forest Park, visit the Beishan underground fortress and do some shopping. Leave Hailar in the evening on the T212 Tourist Train.

Grassland Horse-Riding Tour

- Day 1 : Take a sightseeing tour in downtown Hailar and visit the Xishan State Natural Forest Park.
- Day 2 : Take a bus to Baiyincuo Ridge 60 km from Hailar in the morning. In the afternoon, take a ride on horseback for 30 km in the forest, over the grassland, along a river and in the hills to East Som in Xinihe. Camping on the grassland (two persons share a tent).
- Day 3 : Ride on horseback for another 60 km to enjoy the grassland landscape, visit an aobao and herders' families, and see the flocks of animals. Have a supper of unique Mongolian food to the accompaniment of performances and a lot of toasting. Stay the night in Mongolian yurts at Baiyinhushuo.
- Day 4 : Continue the horse-ride tour for another 50 km and enjoy the scenery on the grassland and see the flocks of grazing animals. The ends in Hailar.
- Day 5 : Leave Hailar.



Nurmenhan Grassland Tour

- Day 1 : Take a sightseeing tour in downtown Hailar and visit the Xishan State Natural Forest Park.
 Day 2 : Set off in the morning by bus to Amgalang Township, 200 km away from Hailar, and stay the night in the township government guest house.
 Day 3 : Continue by bus for another 80 km to Nurmenhan to visit the War Museum in the morning. In the afternoon, drive to the General's Temple and return to Amgalang.
 Day 4 : Drive back to Hailar to visit the Mongolian produce store and the Beishan underground fortress.
 Day 5 : Leave Hailar.

Bird-Watching Tour

- Day 1 : Visit downtown Hailar and the Xishan State Natural Forest Park.
 Day 2 : Take a bus ride to Modamuji (100 km) to watch birds in the Huihe River valley.
 Day 3 : Bird watching. The Modamuji area boasts some 190 species of birds.
 Day 4 : Drive to Ulan Nur (200 km) and watch birds. Camping for the night (two persons share a tent).
 Day 5 : Bird watching. In Ulan Nur, there are more than 300 species of birds.
 Day 6 : Drive to Manzhouli (220 km) via the east bank of Jalai Nur. Watch birds on the way.
 Day 7 : Drive back to Hailar (220 km). Stop by Hoh Nur, where there are also many birds to watch.
 Day 8 : Leave Hailar.

Steam Engine Tour

- Day 1 : Visit downtown Hailar and the Xishan State Natural Forest Park. Go to Manzhouli in the afternoon.
 Day 2 : Drive 30 km to Jalai Nur and see the steam engines in an opencast coal mine; return to Manzhouli.
 Day 3 : Visit the frontier posts and Sino-Russian trading market, and drive back to Hailar.
 Day 4 : Shopping in the morning. In the afternoon, take No. 546 train to arrive at 23:01 in Genhe.
 Day 5 : Tour the forest on the small tourist train.
 Day 6 : Sightseeing in Genhe City. At noon, take No. 546 train to Alihe Oroqen Autonomous Banner.
 Day 7 : Take a bus to Ayuan Forest Farm (60 km) to see the small trains in the forest and visit ruins of the Xianbei people and the Oroqen Folk Customs Museum. Then, drive to Jagdaq (60 km) to take a train to Harbin.

Bicycle Tour

- Day 1 : Visit downtown Hailar and the Xishan State Natural Forest Park.
 Day 2 : Have a 60-km bicycle ride to Hoh Nur Grassland. After lunch, continue the bicycle trip for another 60 km to Xi Ujimqin and camp overnight.
 Day 3 : Take a bicycle tour for 80 km to enjoy the forests, grassland, hills and valleys and Mongolian yurts on the way and visit herders' families.
 Day 4 : Visit the Jalai Nur and return to Hailar by bus.
 Day 5 : Trip to Baiyinhushuo Grassland by bicycle (70 km).

Greater Hinggan Mountains Primitive Ecology Tour

- Day 1 : First fly from Beijing to Hailar. After lunch, take a bus to Ergun City (enjoy the grassland landscape on the way) to visit the boundary river between China and Russia, families of Russian origin and traditional Russian wood homes.
 Day 2 : Take a bus to Mordaga Town to see the large tracts of primitive forest that are still intact. The forest floor there is covered with a thick layer of moss as well as accumulated fallen leaves that exceeds one metre in thickness.
 Day 3 : Go into the forest again for bathing, and to see the birds and plants.
 Day 4 : Take a bus to Longyan Mountain to visit the Bronze Statue of Genghis Khan and the ancient coffins suspended halfway up a mountain cliff.
 Day 5 : Return to Hailar, take a sightseeing tour in the city and visit the Xishan State Natural Forest Park.
 Day 6 : Fly back to Beijing.

Travel Agencies in Hulun Buir League

Name	Address	Tel.
Hulun Buir League Overseas Travel Co.	Hailar	(470) 822 1883
China International Travel Agency, branch of Hulun Buir League	Hailar	(470) 822 4017
Hailar Railway Travel Agency	Hailar	(470) 833 1646
Ergun International Travel Agency	Ergun	(470) 682 4404

Admission Tickets

Place to Visit	Cost (yuan)
Underground Fortress built by Japanese	20
Folk Customs Exhibition	10
Wanghai (Sea-Viewing) Tower	10
Jalai Nur	5
Nurmenhan Museum	100
Gaxian Cave	20
Xishan State Natural Forest Park	10
Oroqen Folk Customs Museum	20

Accommodation

Name of Hotel	Price (yuan)
Hailar Hulun Buir League Hotel	320
Manzhouli Xinyuan Hotel	300
Hailar Beiyuan Hotel	300
Zalantun Hotel	240
Hailar Buir Hotel	280
Oroqen Gaxian Hotel	240
Hailar Friendship Hotel	240
Ergun Asia-Europe Hotel	240
Hailar Hotel	240
Genhe Hotel	240
Manzhouli International Hotel	380
Baiyinhushuo Mongolian Yurt	100 /person
Manzhouli Friendship Hotel	360
Hoh Nur Mongolian Yurt	80 /person
Yakeshi Forest City Hotel	240
Yakeshi Fenghuang Villa	240
Jalai Nur Hotel	280
Hailar Mingzhu Hotel	200

1. A market in the Ewenki Autonomous Banner
2. The holiday resort at Fenghuang Hill, Yakeshi



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Drifting Down the Yellow River

Photos and article by Wu Pingguan

During the summer of 1999, the Yellow River Exploration Drifting Team, comprising a group of undergraduates, postgraduates and news reporters (myself included), spent a month drifting in sheepskin rafts, along the mid-course of the Yellow River from Lanzhou to Baotou. We covered one fifth of the whole length of the river and, as an extra challenge, did so by a most ancient means of travel.



Gansu

Enjoying the Landscape Despite Rain and Wind

The Yellow River originates from the Bayan Har Mountain on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and flows through several provinces

and regions in northwestern and northern China before it empties itself into the Bohai Sea. It runs a course of 5,500 km. From the ancient city of Lanzhou, capital of Gansu, to Shapotou in Ningxia, in a 200 km section, we passed through six gorges, namely, the Sangyuanzi (Mulberry Garden) Gorge, the Daxia (Great Valley) Gorge, the Wujin (Black Gold) Gorge, the Hongshan (Red Mountain) Gorge, the Mijia (Mi Family) Gorge and the Heishan (Black Mountain) Gorge.

Passing Mulberry Garden Gorge

On July 15, the skies rained cats and dogs all night. Such heavy rain had been rarely seen here in recent years. The down-pour showed little sign of letting up when dawn broke. However, the hardy members of the Yellow River Exploration Drifting Team, co-sponsored by Lanzhou University and the Communication Bank, were all set to get on the river. Though the heaven was being unkind, we had no choice but to take our chances and start our quest, if we aimed to finish it on time. In the Water-Wheel Park of Lanzhou, I, a non-swimmer and the oldest among the team, said good-bye to my wife and daughter. We crossed the Yellow River Iron Bridge of Lanzhou. On the other side of the river, the four small sheepskin rafts had been tied together to form two large rafts.

Soon after we set on the river, it suddenly occurred to me that the river was running faster and narrower. The boatmen

shouted out a warning in loud voices: "Watch out! Mulberry Garden Gorge is coming." The Mulberry Garden Gorge was our first gorge, and is located in the border area of Lanzhou and two surrounding counties. It starts from Shajinping in the west and ends up at Changpo Village in the east. The gorge is 27 km in length, 120 to 140 metres in width, with a drop of 22 metres. It is named after the Mulberry Garden Village, and is also known as the Upper Gorge or Lesser Gorge.

I had learned that in this reach of the river, the water was swift and the waves were high. The flow also twists and turns abruptly, producing a treacherous gathering of whirlpools. Only highly experienced boatmen dare navigate here. In the gorge, there are quite a few dangerous shoals, such as the Camel Rock,

Roaring Water and the Hot Water Gully. The latter is extremely dangerous with a 0.5 km section of huge waves.

A nervousness jostled into the crew and grips on the wooden bones of the raft hardened. This was going to be a white knuckle ride. Sure enough, as soon as we entered the Mulberry Garden Gorge, we were engulfed by waves. Sheer cliffs rose on both sides and the sky became a narrow grey strip. The two motorboats journeying along with us were comically tossed up and down like corks in a barrel. Meanwhile our two sheepskin rafts fared no better, bobbing along the cresting water like leaves. The boatmen, however, solidified and

1. The Yellow River at Shapotou, Ningxia
2. Setting off from Lanzhou in the rain
3. When there is a flood, the raft seems to be sliding on mud.



struggled with waves. Maintaining our tight holds, we opened our eyes wider and looked right and left. We veered away from the dangerous shoals and rapids before we realised it.

Before long there came more thundering sounds from the front. "Hot Water Gully!" yelled a boatman. Soon enough, we saw waves of two to three metres high roaring around the rafts. Spooning the paddles, we tried our utmost to adjust direction towards safer areas. Because of a driving rain and, of course, the waves, we were all soaked to the bones. Our raincoats were simply useless. The Yellow River, normally so tame and so peaceful in other parts, revealed to us its vitality and power.

We finally drifted out of that frightening gorge, though I was too scared to remember how long it took. As it turned out, it was the most perilous gorge of all we encountered throughout our trip. I happily noticed that Old Li, one of the boatmen, was sitting relaxed on the bow. He lit a dry cigarette and began pulling at it vehemently. The team members, wet all over, were shivering in the cold wind. Some

hero produced a bottle of Erguotou, a very strong liquor, and everyone had a big gulp.

Sheepskin Rafts: As Good As Warships

About 2 p.m., we entered Shichuan Basin, known as the "Home of Pears". As the name suggests the whole valley was covered with century-old green pear trees with grotesque shapes. Amidst green foliage, there were glistening sparks, indicating ripening pears.

Since the team travelling on land had not yet arrived, the drifting team leader thankfully decided to take a break by the riverside and have some lunch. It was here that we could get off the rafts to stretch our legs a bit. It had been torture sitting on a finger-thick wooden rack, the reinforcement of our rafts, for several hours.

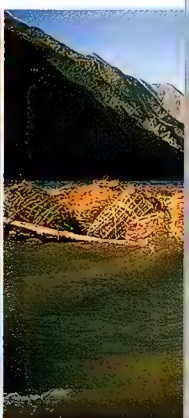
A little after 3 p.m., we saw a train of coaches, carrying our support team, passing over the Shichuan Bridge. So we set off again towards the Great Valley Gorge, where we had planned to pass our first night. The four anxious boatmen herded us onto the rafts and we soon got back into the main flow of the river.

The two motorboats hurried along to catch up with us.

Ahead of us we heard the engine of an escort launch go ominously dead as it reached the Shichuan Bridge. It was brand new, borrowed from the army specially for the occasion. However, as it turned out, the launch had not been properly tried out. The soldiers tried frantically to restart the engine but with no success. Their launch immediately started drifting towards a whirlpool near the bridge. All around the bridge, waves crashed and rushed forward, forming whirlpools of all sizes. The largest one, formed by a cliff jutting out into the way of the surging water, was perhaps 70-80 metres in diameter. Members of the land team, now standing on the bridge a hundred metres above water, were looking on in horror at the scene. Even some of the local people looked very anxious and worried. Meanwhile, the launch was presently circling along the flow of the whirlpool. Fearing the launch might be capsized or smashed up against a cliff wall, soldiers worked their paddles with all they were worth and gradually, they inched the launch

away from danger. "Come on! Row harder!" The crew shouted. Finally the launch broke away from the outer circle of the whirlpool. With a truly Trojan effort, the soldiers had rescued themselves. The anxious crowd gathered on the bridge above burst into hurrahs. "To sail on the Yellow River, a sheepskin raft is better than a gunboat," said one elderly man.

The following Great Valley Gorge was much quieter than the Mulberry Garden Gorge. It is 21 km long and lined with 150-metre-high sheer cliffs. Here the water drop is 24 metres. This used to be the most risky part on the Yellow River's upper reaches. The construction of the hydroelectric plant in the gorge has since raised the water level and eased the water flow. There was no sign of the previous dangers at all. Though there were waves here too, they posed no threat. We skirted cliffs, turned the bends and sailed smoothly on. Everyone was relaxed. We docked by the huge dam of the Daxia Hydraulic Power Plant. The next day, the launches and rafts would have to be hoisted over the dam by winches.





Recounts About Sheepskin Rafts

We took lodge in the hostel of the power plant that night. The 58-year-old Old Li reminisced for us. When speaking of the sheepskin rafts, his eyes shone full of pride and excitement. "Three generations of my family have been living on punting rafts. I began rafting at the age of 18. My father used to transport medicinal herbs, wool and timber from Lanzhou to Baotou. When everything was smooth, it took them a little more than 20 days. After goods were handed

over to the merchants, they would carry their deflated sheepskin rafts on shoulder poles and walk back to Lanzhou. One round trip would be half a year, and they usually made two trips in a year. After 1949, times changed and they were able to take a bus or horse-pulled cart back to Lanzhou. This made life a lot easier. Later in the 1950s, communication further improved and sheepskin rafts were rarely used. Nowadays there are only six rafts left in the whole city of Lanzhou. Four of them have joined the drifting mission this time. The families of these boatmen make their livelihoods by ferrying. Each one of us has a special skill."

First Risk: Fallen into a Whirlpool

We sailed off at Jingyuan. The Yellow River heading towards the northeast turns to the northwest at Lijiaba. Grandpa Ma, one of the boatmen, kept

watch while we were chattering and laughing. Before long, a rubber boat carrying food approached our raft and then gave out supper boxes to each one of us. Seeing the rubber boat might bump into our raft, Grandpa Ma gave it a light push. Unknown to anyone, a whirlpool was just behind our raft, so we were sucked into the spiral. In a second, the man sitting on the left side at the bow was in the centre of the whirlpool with a tall wave behind him plunging forward. Water came up to his chest. Grandpa Ma was thrown flat on the raft and covered by water. I was sitting on the left side at the stern, totally soaked through. My position was on the outer circle of the whirlpool so I was turning along the whirlpool. This time, though, no one was in a panic. Everyone held fast to the wooden pole, ready to meet the challenge. No one made a sound. One second, two second, three second... our askew raft

was lightly tossed up along the whirls and then eased into the waves surging forward. We were lucky.

Second Risk: Encountering an Unexpected Steel Cable

It became overcast as we entered the area of Santan (Three Shoals). Fields and houses began to appear on both sides of the river. Then we saw more and more steel cables across the river in mid air. They were used to pull boats along from one side of the river to the other. So the cables ran along

1. The waterwheels of Lanzhou (by Xie Guanghui)
2. The Shapotou section of the Yellow River (by Chan Yat Nin)
3. A sheepskin raft crossing the Yellow River in Zhongwei, Ningxia (by C. K. Tang)
4. Two small sheepskin rafts are connected to make a bigger one.
5. It requires skill and exercise to fill a sheepskin in one blow.



the width of the river, with the middle part inevitably dangling so low that they came very close to the water.

"Watch out! Row to the side," came the instructions from the launch. The rafts were presently in the centre of the river. The boatmen worked hard but to no avail. One of them narrowed his eyes and observed, and then said, "This cable is pretty low. But we can make it." By then we were only three or four metres away from a steel cable. The old man gave a firm order, "Duck! Let's go!" With



that, he pressed hard the head of a man near him and he himself lay prone at the bow. I lay with my face upwards. My bent leg brushed past the cable. I turned to look and saw the other raft safely passing through too. Only then did we heave a sigh of relief. "That was extremely dangerous," exclaimed one woman team member.

Third Risk: Rushing Through a Makeshift Bridge

Having narrowly escaped these two dangers, we had become naturally very alert. It was getting dark. Suddenly we heard people shouting toward us from the bank. We turned to look

and caught sight of a large bridge being built there. In between the large bridge and us, there was a makeshift bridge. This bridge was obviously higher than the steel cable, but here the water flow was very swift. Besides, there were waves too. What was worse, there were arches standing in water. The launch approached us and tried to pull both rafts towards the bank. It tried several times but failed. It was hard enough for the launch itself in such rapid water, not to mention pulling two large sheepskin rafts. The boatmen had a brief discussion and decided that there was no choice but to venture through the bridge. They adjusted the rafts and sat ready for action. Our raft followed the rapid flow and glided towards one arch. Amidst big noises of splashing water, we went through. The other raft, the launch and the rubber boat all sailed through without a hitch.

When night fell, we cast anchor by a village in the suburbs of Baiyin City. Since we were unable to contact the land team, we settled with a supper of "bean noodle" in a villager's house. We reporters were asked to stay the night in the farmer's house, while the rest of the team stayed in the Northern Wudang Temple, which was said to be the place for the village's VIP guests.

Red Mountain Gorge: A Splendid View

We continued our journey amidst the cracking sounds of firecrackers lit at the local hydroelectric station. As soon as

we got on the rafts, the woman team member began talking about the appalling experiences in the North Wudang Temple. That night, she and the others lay under the gaze of the clay statues and were too scared to sleep. So she lay down and slept on the raft, covering her face with a hat.

As indicated by its name, the Red Mountain Gorge is flanked with undulating red-stone mountains. The river valley is at times narrow or wide. We came upon bends and shallows here and there. With bated breath, we once again became highly alert to help us cope. The Guanyin (Goddess of Mercy) Cliff, a wall

of sheer rock, stands like a screen in the middle of the river. The surging water is stopped abruptly here and makes a sharp turn, churning up the current to form high waves. Led by the boatmen, we sang a song to put rhythm into our movements, whilst brandishing our paddles forcefully. We managed to keep away from the main stream to skirt around the wall of rocks. At noon, we finally united with the support team at a place called Little Mouth and delved into an ample supply of food and water.

Passing Night at the Great Temple Village

Damiao (Great Temple)





Village used to be a transportation junction of waterways and roads in ancient times. Shortly after we entered

the village, we all felt that the folks here were well-informed and hospitable. Having lost contact with the outside world

for two days, we all hoped to make phone calls. However, there was no telecommunication service facilities within 30 km. As we were quite desperate, a warm-hearted man told us that mobile phones could receive and transmit signals if we stood at the top of the highest hill behind the village. Guided by him, we climbed up the hill in the darkness. There I made calls to my newspaper and my family.

The following morning, we climbed up the mountain again. In the distance, the Red Mountain and Black Mountain gorges were washed in the light of the rising sun. The Black

Mountain Gorge is located at the border area of the Jingyuan and Jingtai counties of Gansu, and the Zhongwei county of Ningxia. The valley runs 70 km from southwest to northeast. We bid farewell to the Great Temple Village at noon and headed for Shapotou of Ningxia.

1. A project to stabilise the sand carried out on the eastern bank of the Yellow River in Ningxia (by Chan Yat Nin)
2. Boatmen mending their sheepskin rafts
3. A grazing ground by the Yellow River on the Yinchuan Plain (by Chan Yat Nin)
4. Tourists can ride a camel at Shapotou. (by Chan Yat Nin)
5. Shahu Lake in Ningxia is a newly emerged tourist attraction.



Inner Mongolia

Vast Grassland and Broad Waterway

Once across the threshold of Inner Mongolia, we were greeted by cool breezes, which made the scorching heat simply disappear. Both banks of the Yellow River were covered by vast expanses of sunflowers. The river threads through the Gobi desert and enters an oasis. At a little-known place named Pifanggedan, the Yellow River stops going north and turns east. We were close to our destination — Baotou.

A Party Held on the River Banks

Having waved good-bye to the Shizui Mountain, we went further north and entered Inner Mongolia. Here the Yellow River, a lot thinner, separates Ulan Buh Desert in the west and Hobq Desert in the east. The river moved slowly and we had a headwind. We had no choice but to be pulled along by motor boats.

We skirted mountains, trenched with deep valleys and in the distance, we caught sight of a crowd of people waiting at the foot of the Yellow River Bridge at Wuhai. Accompanied by the sonorous music of an army band, we climbed onto the bank. Enthusiastic Mongolian singers presented us beautiful hata and locally brewed liquor. At the foot of the bridge, cauldrons were laid out, fires were lit and a

spread of mutton, corn, cucumbers, tomatoes and barrels of draft beer was prepared.

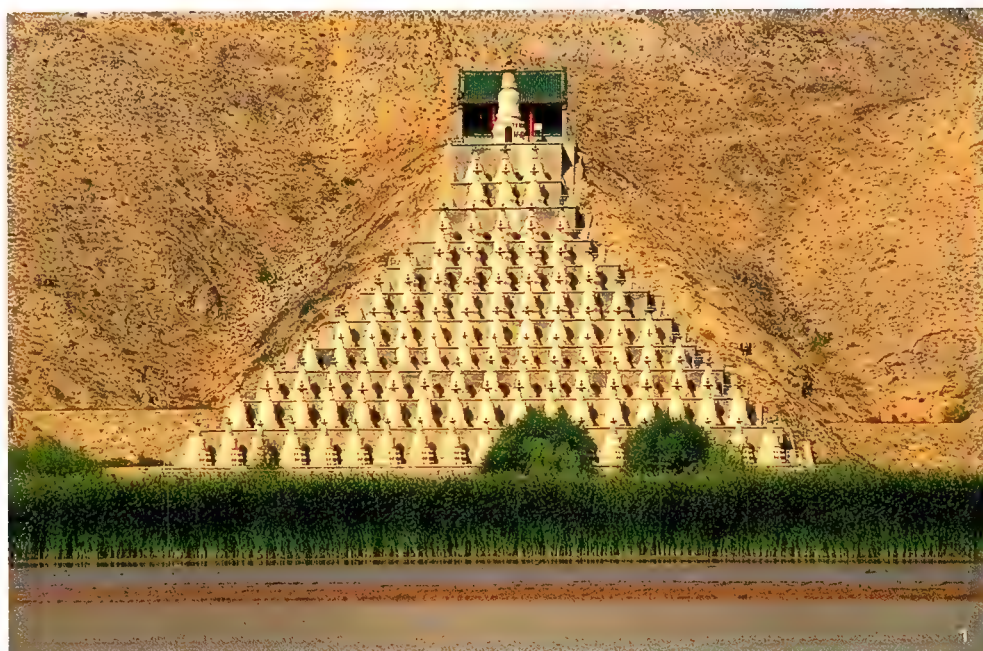
After dark, two bonfires were lit. The Mongolian friends who were good at singing and dancing showed their hospitality and blessings by way of their

performances. We staged short dramatic plays and chorus to express the dauntlessness and humour of the people on the banks of the Yellow River. The song *Unforgettable Night* wafted far, far away by riding on the wind. When it was time to turn in, we were still in joyous mood.

Passing Night by Sheep Pens

The next stop was called Dengkou. The Yellow River in

1. The 108 Pagodas in Ningxia
2. The North Great Wall
3. Wudangzhao Temple in Baotou, Inner Mongolia (by Chan Yat Nin)



Inner Mongolia crawls along slowly and is full of shallows. On top of this, we continued to struggle against a strong headwind. Our speed was thus seriously impaired. Here, on the one side was Ulan Buh Desert and on the other side the Gobi. Occasionally we saw huge stretches of yellow sunflowers. The rafts, though still pulled by motorboats, remained almost static in the zigzagging river course. We became bored by the monotonous scene of the desert. Even the view of the sunflowers seemed to lose its luster. We were anxious to get to Dengkou, but it was impossible to sail 100 km a day.

When dusk fell, we were still moving slowly in a soulless river. It was very dangerous to raft at night so, when we caught sight of a house on the front bank, we sidled towards it. At this solitary desert-house we were told by an elderly Mongolian woman that Dengkou was still a dozen km away.

The wind started up again and the rumblings of our stomachs were by now audible. We did not have any rations, and only one tent, for we had planned to reach Dengkou and its comforts by this evening. Needless to say, we were in a fix. To her eternal credit, though, the elderly woman cooked us a pot of flour paste, which we proceeded to stuff into our mouths with gusto and grains of sand. Before long the pot was empty. Then we erected the only tent we had with us and let the six women members squeeze in for a rest. All the men found a

patch of shelter from the wind by the sheep pens and tried to sleep fully clothed, but it was too cold. I remember hearing our hostess singing softly.

What a fitful night! As soon as day broke, we all rose, packed things up and went to the rafts, shivering with cold. Four hours later, the Dengkou Railway Bridge was in sight. We got in touch with the support team and decided to drop anchor at the foot of the bridge. The support team had been on watch all night.

Repairing Rafts at Pifanggedan

Dengkou is situated in the western Hetao Plain. A huge dyke has been built here for channelling water from the Yellow River for local irrigation. It is here, at Dengkou, that the Yellow River divides into the Yellow River and the Irrigation Canal. Local folks call them the Greater Yellow River and the Lesser Yellow River.

At Dengkou, we visited a few places of interest, such as the Ah Gui Temple, Lotus Cave, the cliff carvings on the Yinshan Mountains and an ancient Handynasty cemetery. We also visited ruins of the Great Wall of the Qin and Han dynasties.

We made a special trip to the Sanshenggong Catholic Church. The church was built in 1880 during the Qing Dynasty. It was once the chief church in the area of Suining. Sightseeing in Dengkou is a fantastic experience, as are some of the local delicacies, such as the local fruit and melon in particular.

Cantelope, also known as "Wallace Melon", has mottled skin and refreshing, sweet yellow pulp. Tomatoes, so red that one would wonder whether they were painted with red paint, are another major local produce. Those not consumed locally would be sent to a local plant for processing into tomato sauce to be later sold further afield. Another place worth visiting is the Bar of Fruit Juice. A great range of fruit is processed into tasty juice here for customers.

Having left Dengkou, the

been more or less damaged. Amazingly, they repaired the rafts stitch by stitch with excellent craftsmanship.

Entering Picturesque Ulansu Lake

On August 10, we reached the Sanhu Ferry Dock in Urad Qianqi. From there, I travelled 14 km to get to Ulansu Lake. Its name means a lake lined with "red willows", a plant growing in the desert. The lake was first formed in 1885. That year, the riverbed of the Yellow River was



Yellow River took us northeast. Unfortunately our journey became even more difficult, as more and more shallows appeared. Time and again, our rafts ran aground. Sometimes, we had to carry the rafts and wade on the riverbed until the water was deep enough for rafting. In several places, the water was only ankle-deep. The boatmen worried about the shallow water. The screeching, rubbing sound of the sheepskin against the pebbles in water visibly pained them. At Pifanggedan, Linhe City, we broke for the night. The boatmen found that almost all rafts had

raised and the water in the Wujia River could not discharge into the Yellow River. Today, Ulansu Lake is a renowned freshwater lake in China.

We drove through Gobi and grassland, passed rocky hills and gullies. Some scattered pools in the distance came into sight. Besides these there were some Mongolian yurts. When we got to the lakeside, we learnt that the little grey pools were actually large expanses of algae which covered almost the entire lake surface. A stand owner on the lakeside told us as the inflow is so laden with fertilisers that the algae grow unnaturally wild. Only

a few years back, Ulansu was a lake of fresh water with excellent fisheries. Now algae has spread so fast that life has become hard for the fish. Specialists have been called in to study the issue to find a way to restore the natural ecological balance.

We walked along a long plank causeway built over the water towards the dock. Here tourists can get on pleasure boats and sail amidst the waterweeds and reeds. I had no intention to go boating but was attracted by the lake's birds. I looked closely and found 12 rare

species, including the white crane, gray crane and white wild geese. They gathered in small groups, stretching their wings, pecking with their beaks, cawing towards the sky.... It was really a touching picture.

Looking for the Final Lodging

There were still about two days in front of us before we would reach Baotou. And the closer to it, the stronger the wind blew. At 8:30 a.m., we got onto our rafts and continued the journey. We felt refreshed from our short stay. Heading into the

wind, we put up a good fight against the large waves and a gale. At first, there were few waves except some slight ripples in the water. We thought it would be easy sailing, since the rafts were pulled along by motorboats. Sadly, as the sun rose high, the waves began to grow with the wind. We had to fish out raincoats and put them at the front of our bodies to keep out wind and water. But waves gained strength and first lapped at our trouser-legs, then wet our faces and finally even drenched our caps. Water poured over our necks and

everyone was soaked through.

Surrounded by waves, we were all quivering in the cold wind. After a few hours, we felt washed out and drowsy. We kept moving our numb legs and arms for fear of cramps. Finally, we stopped at a place called Dabusutai in the suburbs of Baotou. We erected tents and darkness fell. The starving amongst us were busy opening cans, eating pancakes and drinking cold mineral water. I joined my fellow team members and lit a bonfire. We stood in a circle with our backs towards





the fire to roast our wet clothes dry.

Reaching Destination After 28 Days

At 2 p.m. in the afternoon, on August 12, at the Yellow River Bridge of Baotou, we finally reunited with the land team, which had by then been waiting for us for a long time. A sense of accomplishment upon completing our unprecedented mission settled in. It took us 28 days to complete. The total distance, including land and water, was more than 2,500 km,

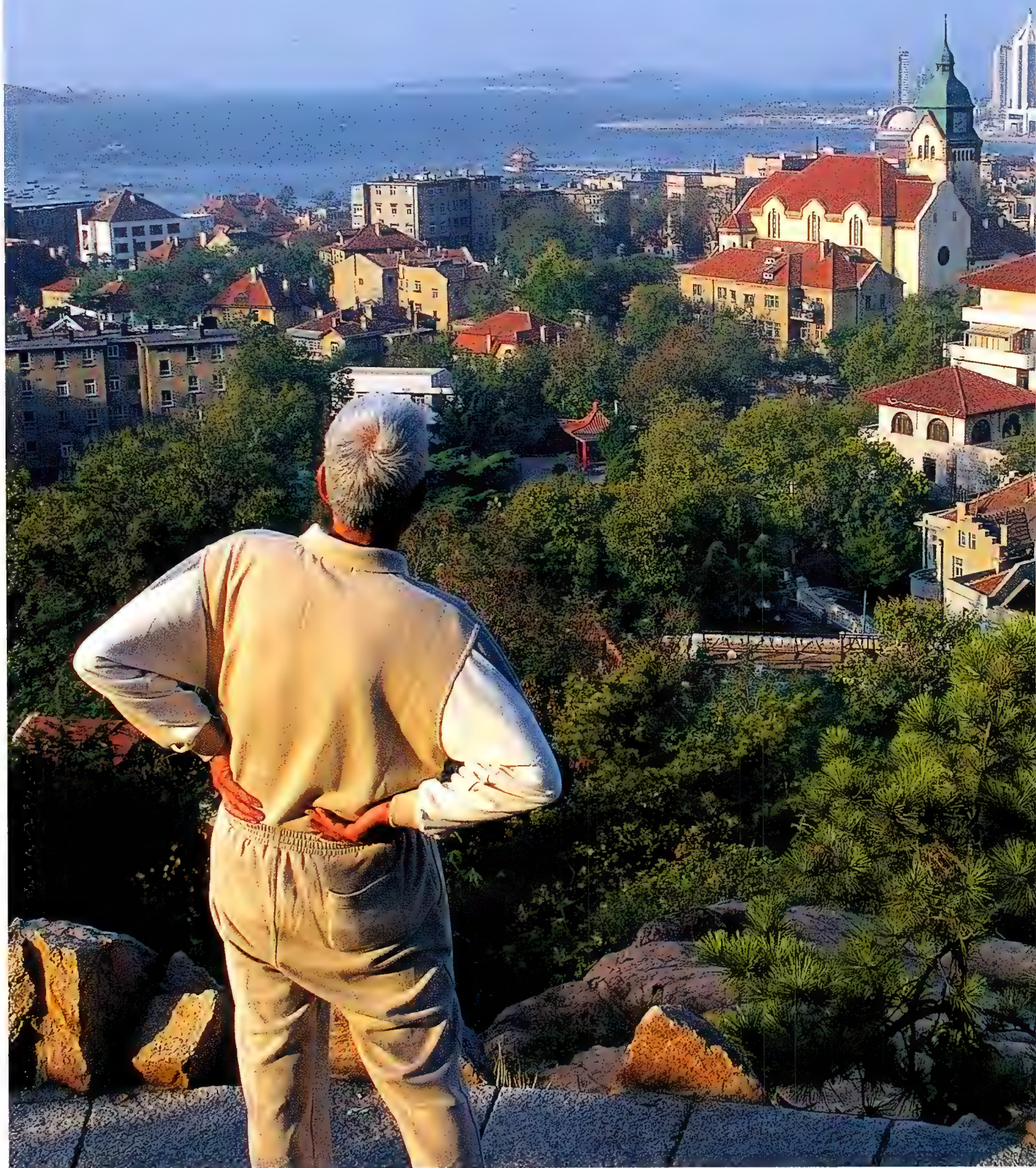
covering the Loess Plateau, Yinchuan Plain and Hetao Plain. We also brushed past the Tengger Desert, Ulan Buh Desert and Hobq Desert. But we arrived with a smile, because all 50 members arrived in Baotou safely.

Translated by Min Jie

1. Ulansu Lake in Inner Mongolia (by Lin Jianhui)
2. The team members running into the desert with great excitement
3. Rafting farther to find a stable decking point
4. Flying high, with the joy of success



HIGHLIGHTS





Touring Qingdao

Photos & article
by Xiao Gang



Qingdao, a seaside fishing village back in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), grew into a harbour town with city and customs administrations, and facilities to accommodate large vessels during the following Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). After the mid-19th century Opium War, Germany made use of an incident involving a Western church to occupy Qingdao, and turned it into Germany's only naval base in the Far East. The Germans began massive urban construction, aiming to make Qingdao capable of competing with Shanghai and Hong Kong. Under the German administration, Qingdao soon grew into a coastal city with typical continental European architecture.

First-time visitors to Qingdao cannot fail to notice the close relationship between the sea and the urban layout — with major buildings all facing the sea. It's an ideal place to enjoy the seaside, the seafood and the harmony of the villas with the hills.

1. Qingdao seems to be a European port city by look.
2. German-style houses can be seen everywhere in Qingdao.



The Red-Roof Houses

Qingdao makes a strong impression on visitors with its Railway Station, a

representative of the typical architecture of the Renaissance period in Germany, and the circle of two-storey houses at Haibin (Seaside) Street. They symbolise the way residences were designed and kept under a certain height by the early German colonialists. The Zhanqiao Pier Hotel on Taiping Road, a typical German-style building that faces the sea, was the city's earliest ballroom, cinema and wrestling arena. Since Prince Henry twice stayed there during the German occupation, it was also known as the Prince Henry Hotel.

There are two streets in the city with luxurious European-style houses that remind people of bygone days. One is Guangxi Road and the other is Guantao Road where foreign banks used to cluster. The Governor's House on the Guanxiang Hill was the office building of the German governor. Built in 1903 according to a German design in line with 19th-century European public buildings, the house cost 850,000 German marks. Several

quarries were opened for building this first granite structure in Qingdao. The red

tiles were from specially opened kilns in Dayaogou.

Further north on Zhongshan Road is the Catholic Cathedral in neo-Roman architecture, a building which took nearly 30 years to complete. The original design was for a much more magnificent building, but as Nazi Germany tightened the outflow of funds, the design had to be altered. Nevertheless its clock tower with a huge cross has always been a city landmark.

Around the Flag Post

A flag post originally stood on top of the Signal Hill in the heart of Qingdao. Residential houses in both Chinese and German architectural styles cluster on and around the hill.

A house with a pointed green roof on the western slope was formerly a German Protestant church. Later it became a US church open to all foreigners and was known as the International Church.

The Guesthouse Museum on the southern



Tips

Zhanqiao Pier Hotel: 31 Taiping Road. Standard room, sea view: 558 yuan; others: 358 to 398 yuan. A short walk from the Railway Station.

Governor's Mansion: 16 First Guanhai Road. Take Bus No. 26 from the Railway Station to Qingdao Road.

Guantao Road: Take Bus No. 6 at Zhanqiao Pier and change to Bus No. 20 at Dayaogou.

Catholic Cathedral: Take Bus No. 6 at Zhanqiao Pier to China Theatre.

Tips

Signal Hill Park: Take Bus No.1 to Jiangsu Road. Opening hours: 6:00-22:00. Admission: 2 yuan.

International Church: Take Bus No.1 to Jiangsu Road.

The Governor's Mansion (Qingdao Guesthouse Museum): 26 Longshan Road. Take Bus No. 1 to Jiangsu Road and walk a short distance. Admission: 10 yuan.

Oriental Hotel **:** 4 Daxue Road. Take Bus No. 26 at the Railway Station to Daxue Road. Standard room rate: 568 yuan.

slope, which has been graced by many noted figures including Mao Zedong, was originally the residence of the German governor who was sacked for the high cost of it. Due to the destruction during WW II, few such buildings can be found in Germany, and many Germans come here to see such extravagance.

To view the southern slope's residences, go to the roof of the Oriental Hotel opposite the hill. European houses with red roofs and yellow walls look like pearls beautifully inlaid in the greenery. At night, rows of charming lights there seem to be leading up into the sky.

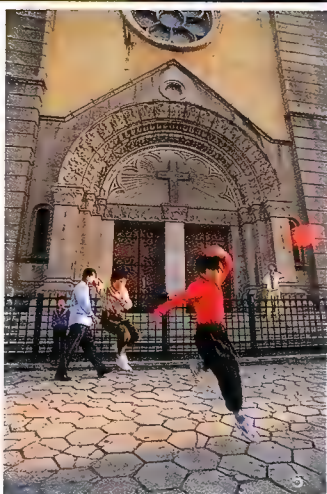
Residences of Famous People

During the 1920s and 1930s, Qingdao was home to a great many men of letters, including Wen Yiduo, Shen Congwen, Wang Tongzhao, Lao She, Yu Dafu, Liang Shiqiu, Xiao Hong and Xiao Jun. It was here they created many works that startled the literary society. Tracing their past also means a tour of exquisite houses in foreign architectural styles.

Xiao Hong and Xiao Jun lived in the same neighbourhood with Shu Qun and his wife. The Xiaos' house, a red-tile roofed granite house that offers a good view of the sea, is aptly described in Xiao Jun's prose, "Neighbour". Kang Youwei, a leader of the 100-Day Reform Movement in 1898, spent his last years in a house on the Xiaoyu (Little Fish) Hill, which had been the German governor's first home in Qingdao. When Kang bought it in 1923, he praised it for its big garden and easy access to the sea.

A two-storey house at the Baguan Hill was where Shen Congwen, a great 20th century writer, completed his autobiography and composed the outline of *The Border Town*. Other great writers of that era, such as Ba Jin and Bian Zhilin, stayed at Shen's house when visited Qingdao.

A marble bust of Wen Yiduo stands in front of his former house, hidden behind the University of Oceanography. In the courtyard



Tips

Huashi Tower: Take Bus No. 26 at the Railway Station to Wushengguan.

French Villa: 1 Shanhaiguan Road. Take Bus No. 26 at the Railway Station to Wushengguan.

Qingdao Fishing Terrace State Guesthouse: 9 Shanhaiguan Road.

Marshal Building: 17 Shanhaiguan Road.

Princess Building: 16 Juyongguan Road.

Soong Family Garden: 14 Juyongguan Road.

close to the sea, is more tranquil than the city area. The many villas in foreign architectural styles have become popular with Chinese and foreign film crews. Prominent Chinese scientists, authors and artists often stay here for holidays or business.

The Huashi (Flowery Stone) Tower on the tip

of the cape was built by a rich Russian who escaped the October Revolution. The most striking features of this building combining Greek, Roman and Gothic architecture are the granite statues by the outside stairs which serve both as lighting and flower pots. Across the street is a French-style country villa surrounded by a spacious garden with a vine-covered fence and gate. Inside the courtyard of the Diaoyutai (Fishing Terrace) State Guesthouse stands a villa which

served as the official residence of the US Seventh Fleet commander. The Soong Family Garden is not the house of the family, but the site shot as the Soong sisters' American home in the TV series, *Soong Qing-ling and Her Sisters*.

1. The Guesthouse Museum where Mao Zedong once stayed
2. The Governor's House
3. The house and statue of Wen Yiduo
4. Mao's room in the Guesthouse Museum
5. Youngsters doing morning exercises in front of the Catholic Cathedral

Tips

Wang Tongzhao's House: 49 Second Guanhai Road. Take Bus No. 26 at the Railway Station to Qingdao Road.

Xiao Hong and Xiao Jun's House: 1 First Guanxiang Road. Take Bus No.1 to Jiangsu Road.

Kang Youwei's House: 5 Fushan Side Road. Take Bus No. 6 at Zhanqiao Pier to Beach.

Shen Congwen's House: 3 Fushan Road. Take Bus No. 25 at Zhanqiao Pier to Huangxian Road.

Wen Yiduo's House: Near the rear entrance to University of Oceanography on Hongdao Road. Take Bus No. 25 to Huangxian Road.

Liang Shiqiu's House: 33 Yushan Road. Take Bus No. 25 to People's Hall.

Lao She's House: 12 Huangxian Road. Take Bus No. 25 to People's Hall.



Blue Waters and Beautiful Bays

It was no wonder that the German colonialists were

fascinated with the beautiful seaside scenery in Qingdao. Today, these sites remain as charming as ever. Some places are bustling with life, accompanied by the lights and noise of the city, while others are noted as tranquil holiday destinations for their gentle waters.

The Lights at Qingdao Bay

From my very first morning in Qingdao, I got up early to look out at the Qingdao Bay with all its changing scenery. The first rays of the sun tinged the sea with a morning glow, creating an enchanting atmosphere. The yellow street lights dimly illuminated the dark contours of the streets. Under the still visible sparkling stars, I could see the long Zhanqiao Pier protruding into the sea.

I took a walk along the pier. Qingdao residents get up early to do exercises, martial arts or sword dance in a park which lies under green pines along a section of the crescent sea dike. At one end is a very lively morning market where

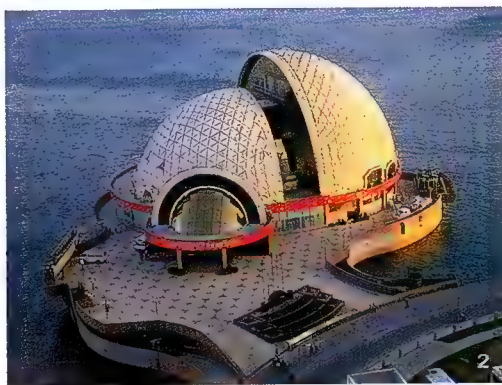
you can find just about everything you can think of. Many visitors

seeing the ocean for the first time seem unable to stop capturing their happy moments on film. At the pier's Huilan (Revolving Waves) Pavilion you can watch the rolling waves and get splashed at the same time. People are often so mesmerised with the sea that they ignore a

valuable range of artistic exhibits on display in the pavilion.

The best time to appreciate the view of Qingdao Bay, however, is in the afternoon. Visitors who are not entirely satisfied with views from a boat, can ascend the snail-shaped islet called Little Qingdao. Here, standing by the white lighthouse and looking through the tree foliage, you can enjoy the sun setting on the bay, or watch the ebbing tide. Both children and adults love this time when they can pick up seashells on the beach. Some people, bare-footed, join in football matches on the sand. Though the sea is less charming when the tide has receded, the bay itself is still quite lovely.

When night engulfs the land and



Tips

Railway Mansion **: 2 Tai'an Road. Standard room: 200 yuan.

Huatian Hotel: 20 Taiping Road. Standard room: 360 yuan; sea view room: 420 yuan.

Revolving Waves Pavilion: Admission: 5 yuan.

Sea cruise: Service hours: 8:00-17:00. Ticket for one-hour cruise to 13 sights: 10 yuan (adults); 5 yuan (children). Ticket office: Zhanqiao Pier; dock: Badaxia.

Tips

Huiquan Bay First Beach: Take buses No. 6, 15 or 26.

Huiquan Dynasty Hotel **:** 9 Nanhai Road. Rates: 450 yuan; 550 yuan (old building, sea view); 650 yuan (new building, sea view).

streets are lit up, the European-style houses along the seacoast suddenly form a chain of colourful lights. Under street lamps, vendors become busy. Visitors come to the Zhanqiao Pier again to enjoy the breeze, to view the lights, to investigate the stalls, to eat seafood, or simply to do nothing but lean against the stone railings to enjoy the romance of the sea.

Swimming at Huiquan Bay

The Huiquan Bay, adjoining the Qingdao Bay in the east, stretches 600 metres long. Its 40-metre-wide beach features fine sand gently dropping into the sea. Blocked by the cape in the southeast, the waves that roll into the bay lose their momentum to create a calm swimming area. The Germans turned this place — which had until that time been used by fishermen to dry out their nets — into a bathing ground. They built shower rooms, brought in rescue boats, installed water sports facilities and built hotels to attract foreign travellers. Soon the Huiquan Bay became a renowned ocean recreational location in East Asia.

Swimming in the sea is a favourite pastime of Qingdao residents. On holidays, the beach swarms with people and the sand is dotted with big colourful umbrellas. I went to Qingdao in the cool autumn, thinking I could take a quiet walk on the deserted beach. I was wrong. I learned that no matter what the weather, fine or gloomy, summer or winter, many swimmers converge there. They first jog or play football to warm up, then run into the cool sea, shouting at the top of their lungs.

The strange shapes and colours of the selection of seashells and sea snails sold by vendors there usually make non-swimmers very happy. Going up the Wave Viewing Pavilion on the Xiaoyu Hill to enjoy the panoramic view of the bay is another good way to remember the sea. Behind are red-roofed villas scattered on the hill slopes and a view of urban Qingdao. Visitors who stay overnight in this area can visit the Huiquan Square to see the laser-controlled musical fountain in the evening.

Fishing at Taiping Bay

Further east is the Taiping Bay. At Badaguan, there is a quiet spot on the road, flanked all year round by sturdy

green pines, called the Lover's Corner. It is popular with young couples and tourists who come to watch and listen to the waves.

A long row of stone steps leads down to the Taiping Bay Beach, where the sand is soft, waves are gentle and the water is clean. In the initial days of the German occupation, this newly-created bathing area was reserved for the German governor for horse riding, hunting and swimming. As times changed, it became a bathing spot for VIPs visiting Qingdao. It is said that Mao Zedong, who loved swimming, came to Qingdao in 1957 and swam there with his family five times,

staying in the water over an hour each time. Often he would dive deep into the water, scaring his bodyguards.

At the base of the cliffs, on which

pine trees grow thickly, big rocks sit. Two dikes that stretch into the sea break the waves and prevent sharks from entering

the bathing area. Anglers of Qingdao often gather on these rocks. Some cast their lines from the rocks, while others use a float to carry their hooks far out into the sea to catch tuna. A few people tie a fresh fish head on a piece of rope and drop it by the dike to catch sea crabs. Often it takes only a few minutes to catch half a bag of crabs. Small boats take people out to sea for a much greater harvest. Of course, many people come to fish here simply to enjoy a moment of leisure by the sea.

The quiet and beautiful Taiping Bay is also where the newlyweds of Qingdao come to take wedding photos. The new couples leisurely walk on the sand, test the waves and stand on rocks by the blue sea. The white waves and blue sky serve as a wonderful backdrop of their pictures.

1. A tour of foreign-style villas is one of the most attractive programmes.

2. The Good World Sea Palace in the Qingdao Bay

3. Zhanqiao Pier in the morning glow

4. Qingdao Aquatic Products Museum

5. A whale specimen at Qingdao Aquatic Products Museum

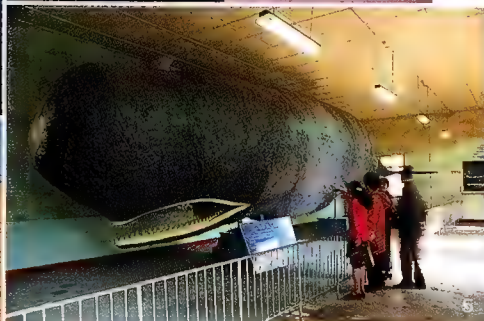
6. Football is often played on the sand at the Qingdao Bay.

Tips

Taiping Bay Second Beach: Take buses No. 6 and 26 to Wushengguan.

East Sea International Mansion: 17 Huiquan Road. Suite: 880-1,100 yuan.

Qingdao Friendship Fishing Club: Speedboat ride, maximum 12 people: 1,200 yuan for 4 to 6 hours, with free lunch, drinks and fishing gear.





Stylish Life of Qingdao

The European traditions and historical background of this seaside city inevitably manifest themselves in the temperament and way of life of the local people. A taste of the food at one of Qingdao's many restaurants will give tourists a real feel of the best part of life there.

Western Food and Seafood

To the west of the Zhanqiao Pier is a foreign-style building with a sign announcing the Sunflower Cafe. Two rooms with low windows there offer great sea views. The owner, who has travelled abroad doing foreign trade business, has a returnee from Australia as his head chef. The restaurant features mainly Australian food, but also serves authentic South American and African coffee, as well as imported and Chinese

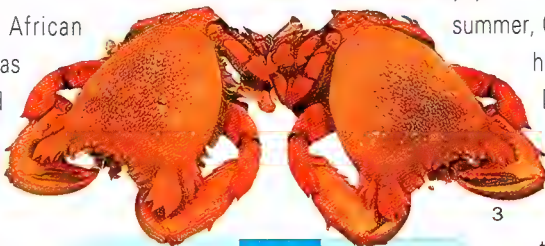
alcoholic drinks. It is an elegant place to eat facing the sea.

The Good World Sea Palace, built on a

rock in shallow water in the southwest of Qingdao Bay, has a spherical shape. It is said that its design is a mixture of the Sydney Opera House and the Disneyland Space Ball. In the daytime, it seems like a huge sparkling ball while at night it resembles a shellfish opening up. Its magic look is enough to attract visitors. In the lobby, there is a display of roast food and a wide range of seafood, a big, well-stocked bar and a fish tank featuring several dozen aquatic varieties ranging from Australian lobsters to Canadian clams and salmon, and US snails. Just a look makes your mouth water and steers you right to a table to eat.

Qingdao International Beer Festival

Every year over two weeks in summer, China's largest international beer festival is held in Qingdao's International Beer City. During the fair, grand performances are staged in the square, which can accommodate 10,000 people. A mini-brewery is specially set up by beer makers to demonstrate the brewing process, and



Tips

Sunflower Cafe: 16 Taiping Road.

Good World Sea Palace: 2 Xilingxia Road.



Tsingtao Beer Home: 56 Dengzhou Road.

Tsingtao Beer City: West of the Tsingtao Beer Brewery on Dengzhou Road.

offer visitors a taste of newly brewed draft beer. Numerous people are attracted to the beer drinking contest in the Beer Palace.

Straight from the bottle or in cups, many young people swallow litres of beer in one go. Only in Qingdao did I learn about the numerous varieties of beer. There are so many kinds exhibited that it seems impossible for anyone to try them all, though many participants have had a good try at it. Besides sampling beer, visitors can also

taste the delicious food, watch performances of Chinese and foreign folk songs and dances, go to concerts or painting and calligraphy exhibitions, or attend sand sculpture competitions and water sports. Lectures, forums and trade negotiations are held too.

Don't worry if you have missed the fair. Beer can be found on just about every corner in Qingdao. Besides hotels and restaurants, there are many beer bars such as the famous Tsingtao Beer Bar, Hamburg Beer

Bar, Jinchuan King Beer House, Beer City and Beer Palace. The best place to go are those breweries with a shop in the front

where visitors almost drink from a pipe directly out of the brewery. The freshness of the beer will simply be unforgettable. Experienced locals never buy bottled beer but take their own containers for a fresh supply.

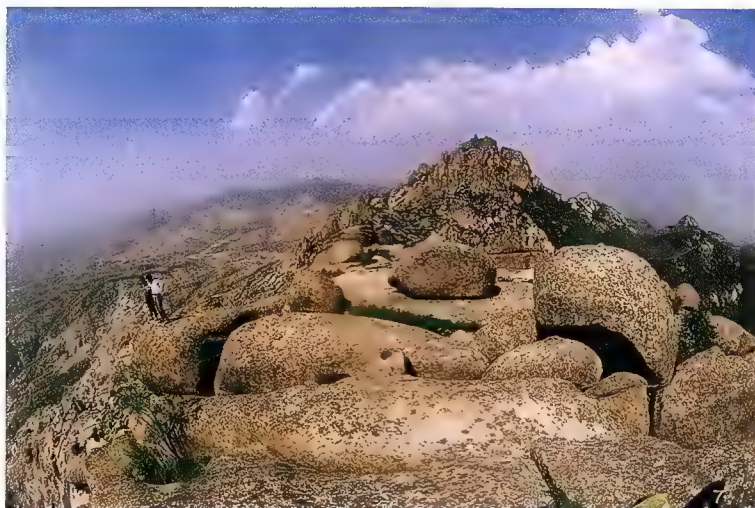


1. Inside the dining hall of the Good World Sea Palace
2. Taiping Bay is favoured by anglers.
3. Australian sea crabs
4. The evening market in Qingdao offers a wide range of seafood specialties.
5. The Qingdao International Beer Festival (by Zhang Kaiming)
6. At the Tsingtao Beer City (by Ning Luqiang)
7. On the western top of the Feilai Peak of Mount Laoshan (by Li Youxiang)

Mount Laoshan in east Qingdao is known as the "Number One Hill on the Sea" for three reasons. First, its main peak, Laoding, at 1,132.7 metres above sea level, is China's only coastal mountain peak over 1,000 metres. Centuries of natural erosion have created magical wonders on it and some 30 other granite peaks over 500 metres to form rows of sheer cliffs, that appear artificially chopped, and deep gullies and ravines. Second, the 80-km coastline has many beaches of fine sand, many islets with beautiful legends, rocks and beautiful bays.

Third, as one of the birthplaces of Taoism, Mount Laoshan was home to many Taoist masters as

The Wonderland of Laoshan



Emperor endured great hardships to search for the method for immortality on this mountain. Emperors of later dynasties all sent Taoist monks to Laoshan to make longevity pills or met with Taoist masters and granted them titles. This mountain, which still has many Taoist temples, is a truly holy place of the Quanzhen Sect of Taoism.

early as in the Spring and Autumn Period 2,500 years ago. Even the First Qin Emperor endured great hardships to search for the method for immortality on this mountain. Emperors of later dynasties all sent Taoist monks to Laoshan to make longevity pills or met with Taoist masters and granted them titles. This mountain, which still has many Taoist temples, is a truly holy place of the Quanzhen Sect of Taoism.

Mount Laoshan is also known for its clear spring waters and ancient trees, including the Han-dynasty cypresses, the Tang-dynasty elms and the Song-dynasty ginkgoes.

Translated by F. Huang



In the Suburbs of Chenzhou

Photos & article by Xiao Gang

The primitive natural resources on the outskirts of Chenzhou, a previously little-known, medium-sized city in southern Hunan Province, have made it an increasingly appealing tourist destination.

Hunting at Wugai Mountain

The first leg of my excursion was hunting at Wugai Mountain, 45 km southeast of Chenzhou. Driving up the mountain in the morning, we encountered such heavy fog that we could barely see a dozen metres away. By noon, the sun finally dispelled the fog. We prepared our hunting gear and took a short walk up the mountain. Under the shade of the forest, we rested and played with the two hunting dogs who had come along with our guide. Then we went down into the thickly forested valley — an enclosed hunting ground.

Suddenly, we heard the dogs barking furiously, flanking their prey — a fat masked civet. It opened its small eyes wide and produced a plaintive whine. The civet defended itself, and had we not arrived in

time, the dogs would have torn it to pieces.

This valley is home to a wide range of wild animals including water deer and antelopes. Among the animals raised in the centre are peacock, boar, badger, hare, silver pheasant, red-belly golden pheasant, and ordinary pheasant.

Boating on Dongjiang Lake

We then drove north to Dongjiang Lake in Zixing. Covering 160 square kilometres, the man-made lake is dotted with dozens of islets. This scenic area offers boating, rafting, exploring and water sports programs, which attract many tourists.

As we drove into a deep valley along the Xiao Dongjiang River, a heavy fog suddenly rose from the water, creating a vast expanse of white mist. As the sunlight broke through



the clouds around the summit of Dongshan Mountain, the heavy fog gradually faded to reveal the outlines of mountains on the river banks. Soon, boats owned by nearby farmers carried us to cruise along the river.

The Dongjiang Dam towers magnificently over the river. Dongjiang Lake, the reservoir behind the dam, is as calm as a mirror. Doushuailing Rock was a famous mountain in ancient times, but now it has become an isolated island in the lake. This



area offers various water sports in summer. Rafting on Dongjiang River is a very exciting program. During a 12-km journey, the water course drops 75 metres. There are 108 dangerous shoals and primeval forest on the way. From Pinghu Lake, there is a

continuous rafting course of 16 km. As we were there in the wrong season, however, we visited the karst caves in the area instead.

Cliffs at Feitian Mountain

Feitian Mountain is a new scenic area that has quickly become popular due to its

1. The hunting dog springs towards its prey.
2. Dongjiang Lake bathed in the early morning rays (by Cao Guangwen)
3. The Fenglin Mountain Villa at the Wugaishan International Hunting Ground



unique landform. The Dongjiang River runs along the foot of the mountain. We took a boat to enjoy the fantastic peaks flanking the river. The first peak we passed is the Woniu (Sleeping Ox) Mountain. Hanging coffins are found inside the cliff caves. The second peak is Liyu (Carp) Mountain. A huge tree grows on the top of the peak, making the mountain look more like a whale spouting water. Further on, we saw Shenxian Zhai (Immortal Stockade); below its cliffs are grottoes housing Ming-dynasty stone Buddhist images. The cliff with a red hue is known as the largest cardinal cliff in southern China.

Leaving the boat, we visited Feitian Canyon. There are black cliffs on both sides of the canyon and small reservoirs at the canyon bottom. Walking out of the canyon, we ascended the Laohubei (Tiger Back). From the narrowed "Tiger's Tail", we looked back along the valley and saw odd rocks that seemed like tiger claws grasping the ground. The Feitian Tourist Resort, visible from the Juxian (Immortal-Gathering) Pavilion on the Tiger Back, is surrounded by deep gullies and steep cliffs.

Near sunset, we hurried to Xishan, or Western Mountain. From a distance, it looked like a sleeping beauty against the last rays of the sun. On the mountain top is a



small pond, which is said to be used as a mirror when the sleeping beauty awakens.

Finally, we came to the area beneath the head of the sleeping beauty. The weathered cliff here reveals countless deep and shallow strips, which expose the rock's original colours.

Whether you seek the tranquillity of Dongjiang Lake or the excitement of Dongjiang River, both reveal the area's intrinsic beauty.

Translated by Jin Jianzhong

1. Walking on the Immortal Path winding on cliffs 100 metres tall
2. A natural barrier — Tongtian Cliff on Feitian Mountain
3. Breathtaking rafting on Dongjiang River (by Wang Liping)
4. Doushuailing Rock, a newly opened scenic spot (by Cao Guangwen)



3

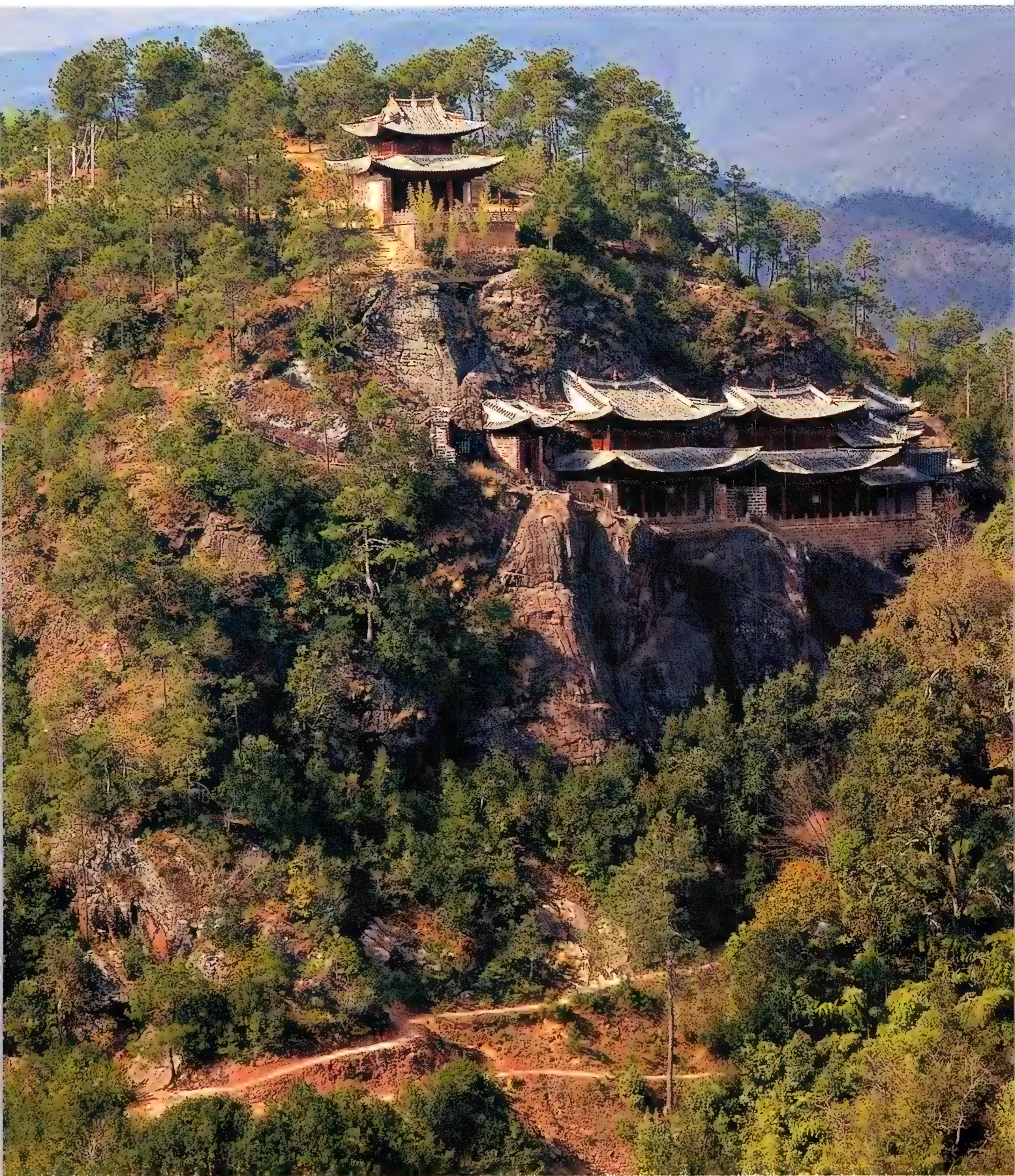


Tips for the Traveller

Wugai Mountain: Special tourist buses go from Market No.165 in Chenzhou to Wugai Mountain. The Fenglin Mountain Villa has standard rooms for 98 to 108 yuan. Admission to the hunting ground is 30 yuan.

Dongjiang Lake: Take a bus from Chenzhou to Dongjiang Town in Zixing, then change to another bus to Dongjiang Dam, and a boat from Dongjiang Lake to the Doushuailing Rock Scenic Area. Admission ticket is 20 yuan to Dongjiang Lake and 30 yuan to Doushuailing Rock. The Dongfang Hotel in Dongjiang Town has standard rooms at 78 yuan.

Feitian Mountain: Take a bus at Market No.165, Chenzhou, to Sandu, and get down at Qiaokou Town, then take a 20-minute boat ride from the Feitian Mountain Tourist Reception Dock to Feitian Mountain. Admission ticket is 10 yuan.



Shibao Mountain in Jianchuan

Photos & article by Dong Ping

From the county town of Jianchuan, we drove southwest for about an hour, before entering the mountains. The sky was deep blue with white clouds. Green pines and firs were all around, and the air was delightfully fresh. My guide for the day, Mr. Zhang Ce, an official from the Standing Committee of the Jianchuan County People's Congress, knows these mountain intimately. He told the driver to take the car to the Shizhong (Stone Bell) Temple and to wait for us there. As our car drove away, Mr. Zhang took me up into the mountains along a narrow path, to a favourite spot of his, a place where we would see a commanding view of the Stone Bell Temple. Later, we would also see the group of statues of King Xinuluo of the Kingdom of Nanzhao and his family.

Lijiang
Jianchuan
Dali

★ Beijing

Treasures of Stone

Walking on foot along the winding path, I found myself stepping through some breathtaking topography. Rocks on the mountain abounded in a great variety of quite extraordinary shapes. Those near Shiziguan (Lion Pass) in particular, looked at varying times, like clusters of pineapples or perhaps even huge beasts, dark green or a purplish-brown in colour. It was a place totally outside my previous experience and a joy to behold. Upon seeing one stone pinnacle, with a flat top shaped like a millstone, though somehow sprouting lotus flowers, it occurred to me where the mountain's name Shibao (Stone Treasure) might come from.

As I admired each in turn, whilst capturing the scenes with my camera, we had soon reached the grotto housing the first group of statues, tucked under a huge protruding rock to the right of Lion Pass.

The grotto is a small affair, perhaps a metre and a half in height and a little less in depth. Sitting on a stone platform inside are five statues with the king on the left and the queen to the right, both sitting in the lotus position — cross-legged and with their hands under their sleeves. They look regal and dignified with full and round bodies. Here they sit with their children, who look to be two boys and a girl. Flanking the platform are attendants. One male attendant holds a writing brush in his hand while a female colleague carries a pretty fan.

The statues, which have been sculptured in stone with simple and realistic lines, capture the likeness of Xinuluo, the first ruler of the Kingdom of Nanzhao, and his family. His kingdom was founded in 649, during the Tang Dynasty, by ethnic minorities in the area surrounding Lake Erhai in today's Dali, Yunnan Province.



It lasted for 247 years with its territories extending to embrace Yunnan and part of Guizhou and Sichuan. Ruled by 13 generations of kings, the Kingdom of Nanzhao exerted considerable influence in the southwestern border area of China.



Statues of the Nanzhao Kings

After taking-in these royal carvings, we strolled to the grottoes at the entrance of the Stone Bell Temple, which is on the opposite side of the grotto at Lion Pass. The statues here show more Nanzhao kings. In Grotto No. 2 are statues of King Geluofeng and his civil and military courtiers. The king himself wears a tall crown and sits cross-legged with his hands up in his sleeves. He is surrounded to his left and right by officials carrying swords, seals, fans and flags. This chamber is magnificently laid out with sculptured figures at different heights, producing a strong three-dimensional effect. An atmosphere of the prosperity pervades the whole scene.

The main statue in Grotto No.1 is believed to be that of King Yimuxun. Most of the statues on both sides of him are civil officials with books in their hands, signifying that he was a king deeply interested in the Han culture. In accordance, most of his ministers were well-versed in the rituals of the Han people in the Central Plains. The Kingdom of Nanzhao reached the zenith of its prosperity during King Yimuxun's term in throne.

These three kings are the most prominent of the Nanzhao rulers. The Kingdom of Nanzhao was founded, with the help of the Tang court, by King Xinuluo, who worked hard through a difficult time. The kingdom then grew powerful under King Geluofeng, who united with Tubo to defeat the Tang army at the Xi'er River. Then, later, the kingdom became prosperous, under King Yimuxun, who resumed friendly ties with the Tang court and expanded his kingdom's territories.

The grottoes highlight the history of the Kingdom of Nanzhao by choosing its three most representative rulers and portraying them in a vivid artistic form. The statues provide us invaluable historical data of the political, military and cultural situation of Nanzhao, as well as its clothing, ornaments and prevailing customs. Needless to say, the

grottoes were listed in the 1960s as a key cultural heritage site worthy of state protection.

On the mountain slopes, inside the Stone Bell Temple, are more beautiful grottoes. Most of the statues in these grottoes are religious figures, such as Guanyin or Goddess of Mercy, Ananda, Manjusri, Samantabhadra and the Eight Heavenly Guardians. All of them are finely and vividly sculptured to show their different personalities. For example, the Sad-Faced Guanyin sits cross-legged with drooping eyebrows and an honest face; the Guanyin of Sweet Dew stares out with a willow branch in her hand, her pretty, smiling face brimming with youthful beauty; the Narrow-Waisted Guanyin with her slim and

graceful figure stands in an elegant posture. These Buddhist divinities are religious figures rendered with an endearing human warmth and personality.



The Enshrined Ayang Bai

When I walked to Grotto No. 8, I have to admit that I was a little taken a-back by what I saw. In the niches in the left and right walls are statues of two ferocious-looking Heavenly Guardians, but enshrined on a lotus seat between them, is not a god or Bodhisattva, as one would perhaps expect, but instead a vagina carved into stone. It is sculptured in simple and gentle lines but rich in texture. The local Bai people call it Ayang Bai. Ayang meaning "girl," and Bai, "the female sex organ".

The Ayang Bai is sculptured without artistic exaggeration, nor abstraction. It is, in fact, a lovingly detailed replication of the real thing. A couplet written in ink on either side read, "Finding the road to life; Opening the door to felicity." As an object of worship, one can see its' appeal. However, to be placed side by side with many Buddhist images, in a mountain temple, it is really a rare and thought-provoking sight.

A lavish singing party is held annually on Stone Treasure Mountain, early in the eighth lunar month. At this time, all the local women come up to the temple to worship Ayang Bai. At other times of the year, some married women come here to pray for a child. Pregnant women also pray here; they smear sesame oil on the Ayang Bai, whilst praying for a smooth and painless childbirth. Such is the devotion that, over the years, two deep depressions have been worn into the flagstone floor due to the volume of women coming here to kneel down and pray.

As for the origin of the Ayang Bai worship, differing religious scholars, and researchers of folklore, remain at odds with one another. Some maintain that the roots can be traced back to the Esoteric Buddhism of Tibet. The wife of Siva oversees sexual competence and

stands for "coupled practice and cultivation of the Buddhist truth" or, in other words — sexual intercourse.

Others believe that the worship of Ayang Bai is an age-old custom belonging solely to the Bai people. As the marriage custom of the Bai people requires the husband to live in the house of his wife's family, Bai women enjoy a very high status at home. In the Bai temples of Wenshan Prefecture, a vagina sculptured in clay is enshrined side-by-side with Bodhisattvas.

Still more think that Ayang Bai worship has been handed down from the worship of reincarnation in primitive religions. Similar practices can still be found elsewhere in the world. In ancient Egypt, a god named Osiris was worshipped. His liturgical symbol was the penis. Religious ceremonies in India are also filled with the primitive worship of regeneration. And Aboriginal tribes in central Australia observe a "regeneration festival", a ceremony held during the time of year when plants and grass are thriving and animals are mating. The focus of this ceremony is to wish for the continuing multiplication of the population and all things on earth.

Just why exactly the Ayang Bai is enshrined in a temple, side-by-side with images of emperors, kings, the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, is anyone's guess and subject to much conjecture. The practice has no place in the Buddhist concepts of the Central Plains, and is a flagrant taboo. This, I believe, reflects the open, all-embracing nature of the Bai people, exercised throughout their long history. It also shows that the early Bai people were liberalised enough to display human nature in a creative way, which has to be admired.

Although the Bai people worship the Ayang Bai, they never deify it. In their minds, it was always the earthly mother, the mother who gives birth to and brings up their offspring.

Previous page: Stone Bell Temple on Shibao Mountain (by Wang Dajun)

1. The author at the temple
2. Statues in one of the grottoes
3. Sculpture of a Nanzhao king (by Chen Keqin)
4. Ayang Bai worshipped in Grotto No. 8



The Hanging Monastery of Yunnan

When it was nearly noon, we had a simple meal prepared by the monks who populate the Stone Bell Temple. After the meal, feeling adventurous, we went straight on to the Baoxiang Temple, a few kilometres away. The temple, also known as the Hanging Monastery of Yunnan, is a rare sight on the Stone Treasure Mountain.

When we arrived at the front gate of the temple, I looked up and found that the temple was built on the overhanging rocks of a cliff several hundred metres high. All the temple structures and halls were painted with bright colours.

Up we went, along a flight of stone steps, until we reached a peaceful and elegant closed courtyard. The main building is Arhats' Hall which is attended by two nuns dressed in grey robes. From inside the hall we could hear the faint sound of Buddhist music. Wafts of incense smoke drifted about. The buildings that flank the yard are set aside for worshippers to stay in during the night. Though deserted when we visited, we were told that on the selected days for worshipping Buddha, the temple would be busy.

The Baoxiang Temple, originally named Zhuyan Temple, was first built during the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) as a sister complex for the Zhusheng Temple on the famous Jizu Mountain in Binchuan County, Yunnan. Sadly it was later destroyed, though was rebuilt again in 1690 during the Qing Dynasty. As it was described that around the temple "are clear springs with stalagmites, weird-looking rocks shaped like Buddha, birds, beasts or bells and drums, all created by nature", the temple is thus renamed Baoxiang, which means "holy images".

A Faithful Monk

Looked from the side, the temple seems rested on a terrace half-way up the cliff. Against a background of blue sky and white clouds, the temple looks dangerously perched on the cliff face. It is a

spectacular and memorable sight nonetheless.

When we were taking a rest in the courtyard of the temple, we were told the following story.

Apparently, before the "cultural revolution", this temple was supervised by an abbot, who faithfully catered for the upkeep of the temple. He performed his religious duties with sincerity and was duly loved and esteemed among the local believers. However, when the "cultural revolution" broke out, Red Guards came to his temple and destroyed many of the buildings. They took the abbot away for criticisms and then drove him away. Thereafter, the once happy abbot wandered from place to place, suffering humiliation wherever he turned. It was not until the end of the 1970s, that the abbot was allowed to come back to the temple. By then, the temple had fallen into a dilapidated state, and the faithful monk had become a white-haired old man.

At that time, nobody thought that the temple could ever rise again. But the abbot, of course, believed differently. He had faith in the power of the pious way and believed the Baoxiang Temple could be restored to its original splendour in the name of Buddhism. Defying hardships, he worked through the days,

months and years to solicit donations. His devotion won great respect from the people living in the area.

Without help from the authorities, he eventually collected several hundred thousand yuan, which he used to restore the temple to its original glory.

The temple today is visited by the devout throughout the year and the old abbot is highly admired for his dedication and resilience.

It was by pure luck that I was brought from the far-away Beijing to the Baoxiang Temple hidden on the Stone Treasure Mountain. And although I did not have an opportunity to meet the revered abbot, I am sure his story will linger on through the years in my memory.



—A Fastidious Way for Believers—

We walked further along the steepening path, through a karst cave. Along our way were three buildings, a hexagonal pavilion, the Maitreya's Hall and the Yuhuangge (Jade Emperor's Pavilion). Inscriptions punctuate the protruding rocks of the cliff face with treats such as "A Magic Rock of the Southern Land" and "There Are Wonders in Whatever You See", which thankfully eased my mind off the effort of the climb.

Higher up still, and through another cave with water dripping, we reached a narrow flight of steps 50-60 metres long, hewn from the rock face. I had to bend down and move sideways to reach a small but quite roomy pavilion. A statue of Bodhisattva Guanyin marks the highest point of the Stone Treasure Mountain.

It made me feel dizzy to look down from the pavilion. I didn't dare even to move a half-step forward towards the edge of the cliff. Known as the "99 steps", the whole cliff face is lined with rock strata. Compared with the Hanging Monastery on Mount Hengshan in Shanxi Province, the Baoxiang Temple is even more precipitous and secluded. The construction of the Baoxiang Temple seems to be a test of people's devotion to the Buddha and their fortitude. Those who are able to climb to the highest point are considered the most devout of the believers.

—Singing Party on the Stone Treasure Mountain—

From the Baoxiang Temple, we walked back down to a grassy, gently undulating slope surrounded by green pines and babbling streams. This quiet, unassuming little nature spot is the place where Stone Treasure Mountain's annual grand singing party is held.

The singing party is an even greater attraction than the Baoxiang Temple on Stone Treasure Mountain, because it means a day of festivities.

The party is a great social occasion. On the day, people pour into the open space along the roads and paths. They come in motor vehicles, horse-drawn carts, farm tractors or on foot from the local villages and the town of Jianchuan. Others come from further afield of Yunnan, like Eryuan, Lijiang, Dali and Lanping. There are not only Bai people, but also Yi, Lisu, Naxi and Pumi peoples. Old and young, men and women, all are dressed in their ethnic holiday clothes. Among them are highly skilled singers who compose and sing impromptu arrangements on all subjects. There are also those who just come to observe the sight.

The grassy slopes and woods are crowded with people and the sound of songs and laughter are everywhere. People in pairs and small groups sit under the trees, on the grass or by a stream. When a girl sings a melodious Bai song, a young man would accompany with a three-stringed, dragon-head guitar suspended in front of his chest. Singers can also be accompanied by a mouth string, bamboo flutes or whistles made from the leaves of trees. Some sing solo



without accompaniment.

All the singers sing in a carefree style. There are often singing duets of a man and a woman, throwing questions and answers at each other, composing as they go along. The themes of the songs can be anything from heaven to earth, or from antiquity to the modern times. Most of the songs, however, are love songs sung between a man and a woman, and used as platforms to express their feelings. From the questions and answers, the singers are able to find out the other party's attitude towards life, wisdom, ability, knowledge and love. Lyrics are often full of racy metaphors, trenchant wits and rich poetry. There are great variations in the tunes, which can be amorous and lingering, merry and rollicking or perhaps sentimental and passionate.

During the singing, neither party is supposed to stop. The singer who fails to answer the questions, or who sings out of tune, is considered defeated. However, a pair of smart and highly accomplished singers can perhaps sing continually for hours and even days, until they have fully expressed their feelings for one another. The spectators too would be able to enjoy the songs to the full, from time to time rocking with laughter or listening in perfect silence as the songs change in tone and mood.

When night eventually falls, cooking smoke begins to rise up the mountain slope as people cook their fragrant rice with spring water and prepare their native dishes. A stranger would be invited to share their supper as long as he or she sings or plays a musical instrument.

Late at night, the fires grow into bonfires, burning on the mountain slope and in the woods, while singers continue their singing. Lovers sit close in the shadows and gently drop words of love into each other's ears. Stone Treasure Mountain is submerged in the sound of songs and joy until dawn.

1. It is believed that by planting small twigs by the big rock on Shibao Mountain, one's pains in the back will be gone.
2. The Hanging Monastery of Yunnan
3. A singing party is held every year on Shibao Mountain (by Yang Jie)



Back from Mount Huangshan

Article by Chan Yat Nin

For photography lovers, Mount Huangshan is a holy grail. Many visit this scenic mountain time and time again, each attempting to catch its elusive fantasy on film. Due to the weather, though, not every trip is a guaranteed success, but all return addicted nonetheless, seduced by the charms of this natural wonder. At the end of each tour, there is always the desire to make another one. Indeed, it is said that people who have visited Mount Huangshan aren't happy with any other mountain.

During last Spring Festival, Hong Kong China Tourism Press and the Hong Kong Productivity Council jointly organised a landscape



Fine snow and young woods (by Chen Jie)



Layer after layer (by Hua Fu)



Dawn break (by Lao Haixin)



A land of snow (by K. K.)

photography workshop. After a series of discussions, a team of 28 people, including teachers and students, went to Mount Huangshan to practice and marvel.

Winter is the slow season for the majority of tourism on Mount Huangshan, but it is a favourable time for photographers. In winter, the magnificent scenes of the cloud-sea unfold more often and the chances of witnessing a perfect sunrise or sunset are high. Covered in snow, the imposing peaks and sturdy pines look all the more attractive. Moreover, as there are usually few visitors, the environment is cleaner and more convenient for taking photos.

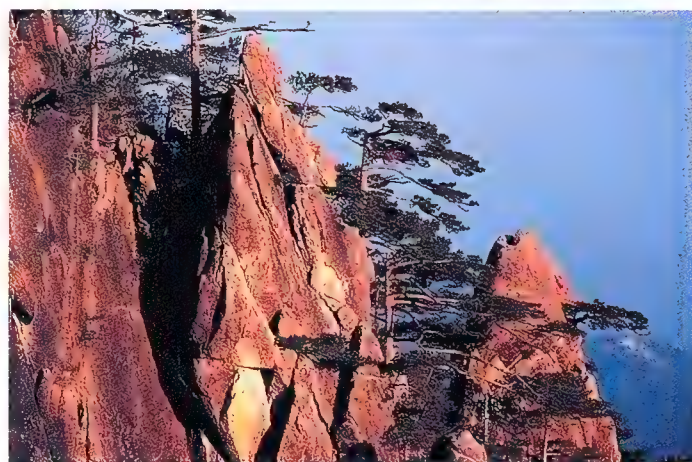
We spent a total of five days and four nights together on Mount Huangshan. During dusk for four of our days, we experienced the whole range of different weathers, over-cast, fine, cloudy, misty and even snowy. We were lucky to have such variety and we caught a few spectacular sunrises and sunsets. As a team, all of us were absorbed in our passion for photography, getting up early and going to bed late.

One month after our return to Hong Kong, we gathered again and showed each other our shots of Mount Huangshan. Many wonderful photos made everyone happy and we were soon thinking about making another trip to the mountain. I wonder if we've become addicted too.

Published here are some of our favourite shots.



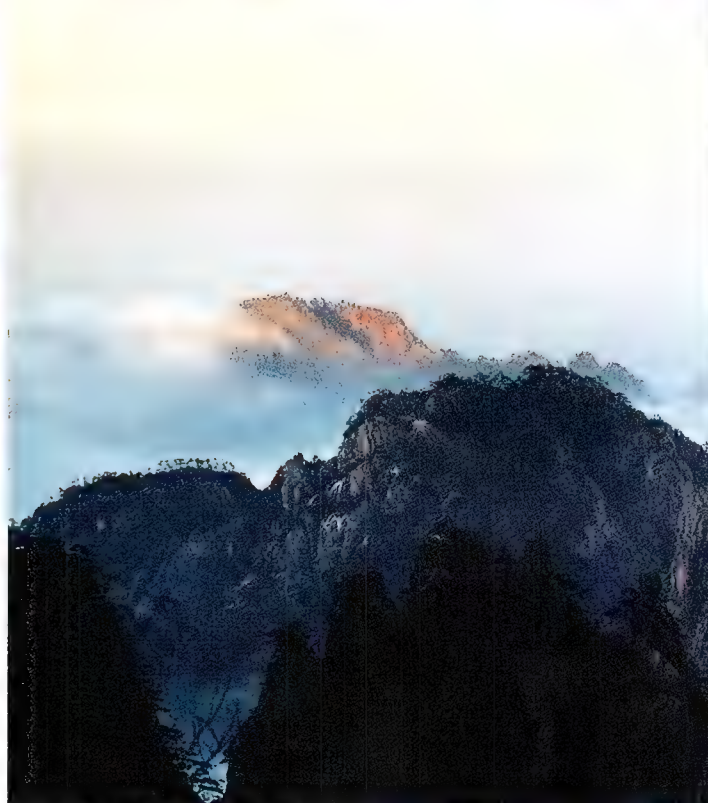
A roof decoration in the ancient village of Xidi (by Mo Yongguang)



Peculiar rocks and fantastic pines (by Chen Lin)



Mountains of the East Sea (by Li Rong)



The North Sea in twilight (by He Fusheng)



Sunrise (by Lu Hongxing)



ON THE WAY

Slip-Sliding Through Shangri-La

Photos & Article by Via La

Shangri-La, the name of an utopian place as described in James Hilton's novel, *Lost Horizon*. It evokes visions of towering snow capped rugged peaks, and deep narrow gorges with thunderous waterfalls spilling into pounding rivers; an idyllic setting of flower-studded meadows, mists and magical kingdoms. As many others have done so and yet more will continue to do so, myself and a few friends made Shangri-La our quest.

Hilton's Shangri-La supposedly was set in the area bordering Tibet, Yunnan and Sichuan. For many people, this area is the actual location of Shangri-La. The people who live here are primarily Tibetan, though minorities such as the Naxi, Nu, Drung, Mosuo, Pumi, Lisu, and Yi also inhabit the region. In many ways, they have the eternally vital nature Hilton envisioned.

On a very wet, muddy Monday in August, we foreigners met at the Tibet Hotel in Zhongdian, capital of the Dêqên

Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Yunnan Province and base-camp of Shangri-La, to plan our adventure.

Visiting Zhongdian and Bita Lake

Though we were anxious to get on the road, we needed to stick around Zhongdian for a few days to wait for a missing member of our group. Zhongdian is a few hours' drive by bus from Lijiang (on the edge of Shangri-La), home of the Naxi people. Numerous Naxis also live in Zhongdian as do many Han people, but Zhongdian, on a plateau 3,000 metres above sea level, is the base for the Tibetans in Yunnan. Most of the villages in the surrounding area are Tibetan.

There was plenty to do in and around Zhongdian. The day after our arrival, we hired a vehicle and driver who took us to nearby Bita Lake and the grasslands. It was nearly two hours from our hotel to Bita Lake. There is a horse camp at the parking lot, supplying



the visitors an easy way to the lake. We chose instead to spend the hour hiking through the woods, ruts, and muck to the swampy flower-studded grasslands alongside the lake.

The Bita Lake region is home to a wide variety of bushes, including larch, birch, bamboo, aspen, azalea and rhododendron, as well as various mushrooms. Horses lazily grazed amongst the late summer patches of brilliant flowers, which appeared even more intense juxtaposed against a heavy mist moving in.

After reaching a tourist yurt camp set up at the end of the trail, the mist unleashed a sudden downpour. We managed to locate an empty Tibetan-style tent to hide under. With its benches and wooden table to sit around, it was the perfect place for a picnic, so we munched on the snacks we'd brought. At the first sign of a sun-break, we made our way back to our driver, but this time some of us cheated and hired horses for the uphill return.

Our driver was not alone. A group of locals had gathered around the hitching post at the only store to chat. Once they spotted us, they came to ask the usual questions to foreigners. To our surprise these locals were neither Tibetan nor Naxi, but rather Yi from the Greater Liangshan region of Sichuan. The rainbow-striped hats and skirts of the single ladies were a delightful photo opportunity, though the girls were terribly shy.

On the way back to our hotel we asked to stop in one of the Tibetan villages so that we could visit a traditional home. Homes in this region, built of wood and adobe, are like miniature fortresses in their compounds with heavy wooden gates. Tiny windows in the adobe walls are framed in layers of primary colour-painted designs.

Most people were away, working in the hills, and those that were around seemed shy. But we met a young boy who invited us into his home. We climbed up a wooden ladder to an open balcony and entered a massive room with hand-carved chests and shelves. A wood-stove was the focal point, though the smoke and tiny windows made it hard to focus. Butter tea, freshly made in their own butter churn, was served with dried sour cheese, and we spent the remainder of the day enjoying this most gracious hospitality.

Wednesday arrived but our friend had not, so we wandered about Zhongdian. Though there is no longer an old town quarter as a centre of commerce,



there are still many shops which cater to Tibetan residents and travellers. Also, an open market, selling mostly Tibetan-style wares, had butter bowls, sheepskins, carpets, robes, knives, traditional clothes, jewellery, dried yak meat, and about every other kind of item for sale.

A short ride out of the city is the Gaindain Sumzen Temple, or

Guihua Temple, a Tibetan Buddhist monastery. Located in the countryside at the road's end, it is easy to reach. Napa Lake, a 10-minute drive out of town in the other direction, is another good place to do a day hike.

Back at the Yak Hotel we enjoyed an Italian spaghetti feast, cooked and served by two Italian travellers hungry for food from their homeland. Our group of multi-national travellers included Americans, Australians, English, French, Irish, Italians, Swiss, as well as Japanese and Myanmarers.

On the Road to Dêqên

Our missing expedition member finally appeared on Thursday afternoon, so we were able to hit the road early Friday morning. The first bus to Dêqên was scheduled to leave at 6:50 but didn't leave until 7:30 because I was robbed on the bus, but it was too late to catch the pro thieves who had slashed the pockets of my jacket and

1. A caravan carrying tea and salt
2. Monks at Gaindain Sumzen Temple, Zhongdian
3. Taking shelter under a Tibetan tent
4. The charming Bita Lake



made off with a bundle of loose bills. It was a lousy way to start the trip.

Rocks, dirt, and bits of cobblestone make up the road leading to Degen. We made a meal stop around 10:30. As we continued, the road climbed past spruce and larch forests dotted with rhododendrons (though not in bloom). Wild iris greeted us at the summit, and from there it was literally all down hill to Dêqên. Arriving at 4:30 p.m., our travel guide met us at the bus stop and led us to Dexin Hotel and then out for a very nice meal where we discussed more about our travel plans.

Saturday morning we were anxious to get going, as we were already nearly one week behind in our schedule. We had been informed by our guide that the road between Yanjing and Markam in Tibet was covered by a slide and wouldn't be opened for weeks. Our disappointment was immense, but we were not going to give up. Maybe he had been misinformed, or maybe the road would be opened by the time we got there — we wanted to take that chance.



The driver wanted our large backpacks to be stored at the hotel. It meant we would be returning. Also, the Beijing Jeep we rode in was the only vehicle available and four foreign women had to squish into the back seat so that the guide could ride in front. Luggage was kept to a bare minimum.

Departure was late morning — 8:30 — and the last available place to stop for food came at 11:30 a.m. so we stopped. Food stops were infrequent on those more remote

routes. At 1:30 p.m. we reached our first rock-slide, which had obliterated the road. We traversed it on foot. By 5:15 p.m. we had secured a jeep for hire on the other side of the slide and managed to get to Yanjing an hour later. There were many more washouts and slides with straight down drop-offs — truly a road for nerves of steel. The Dêqên-Yanjing “highway” is a narrow dirt road carved out of the hillside, with a raging river below, which widens and then narrows into a gorge full of fierce rapids.

It was raining by the time we reached the town centre and the dirt streets

quickly turned into mud. Yanjing is like something from the Wild West, with shops built from logs, and hitching posts in front of the shops to tie up the horses. The main attraction at this time of year is the mushroom market (and the foreigners at the mushroom market). Bed came early.

Rains continued throughout the night, worsening the road ahead. Since we couldn't go forward, we would have to return. We spent the next morning visiting the Tibetan Catholic church in Shang Yanjing (it was Sunday and around 50 Tibetans had gathered for morning prayers), as well as the Tibetan Catholic cemetery that housed the remains of two foreign priests. We got on the road after lunch. We had forgotten the rains also worsened the road behind.

Slides: One After Another

The first slide was an hour after we were on the road, and caused us an hour delay. After a 10-minute drive the next slide faced us and once again there was an hour delay. After a meal we drove another short distance only to encounter a third slide. It took us 45 minutes to dig out of it, but by then it was dark and we couldn't continue. Reluctantly we returned to where we had eaten our meal, a small inn serving as a tiny road-stop alongside the raging river.

The following day was a repeat of the previous, only worse. It took us nine hours to travel 70 km. Of the 10 or more slides we crossed, at least six of them we had to dig through. Around high noon a donkey and horse caravan needed to pass. It was sad to see the struggle that went on, trying to get the animals out of mud which already reached their bellies. A few hours later down the road we spotted a solo horse, caked in mud, looking rather lost.

Some caravan people unloaded gear from their animals right where two of us were taking cover from the intense summer sun of the high plateau. They were as interested in us as we were in them. In their heavy canvas bags was salt and tea.

Soon a simple fire was heating up a blackened pot filled with



water and tea. Between the two of them they had just three tin bowls and some jars of hot chili paste. Their lunch consisted of salt tea, buckwheat *baba* (bread of the Yi people from Greater Liangshan in Sichuan), chunks of dried cheese and green pepper. They kindly offered it to us, though we declined.

Later, on the road again, just before reaching Dêqên, we passed Meili Snow Mountain. Catching a tiny glimpse of the rugged snow-capped peak, we also saw a bit of the glacier — a cool treat after such a hot gruelling day. A Tibetan Buddhist temple on the way into town was tempting to visit, but all we wanted was a hot shower.

The next day we returned to Zhongdian with 12 different wildflowers which we had picked up at the summit on the way and made arrangements with our driver to meet us the following morning — Wednesday — to take us to Litang, Sichuan. From there, we would

try to find another driver who would be willing to take us along the Kangding-Markam way to Tibet.

Wednesday, 11:30 a.m., we set out — a very late start after having to re-negotiate the driver's fee. By the time we reached Xiangcheng in Sichuan, it was 8 p.m. After a simple meal, and locating beds to sleep in, it was nearly midnight.

The next day, Thursday, we left to continue our journey towards Litang. After just one hour we hit our biggest landslide yet. The entire hillside slid down and over the road, and no amount of digging by the drivers

stuck on each side would make a dent in such a massive slide. After stalling for more than three hours, wondering what to do next, we ended up returning to Xiangcheng and then to Zhongdian the next day, where we caught a sleeper bus back to Kunming.

The Loveliest Journey

One of the loveliest journeys in China is the route from Zhongdian to Xiangcheng. We saw rocky mountains with beautiful wildflowers and dzos (half-yak, half cow), streams, and Tibetan fort-like adobe houses with ornate wooden window frames. Every turn and bend was worthy of a stop. Even a burnt skeleton forest was picturesque. We witnessed mushroom hunters out in full force, both in the pine forest and on the barren rocky hills. It was as though we were driving along an ancient route to a magical

kingdom of adobe fortresses.

Unique to this particular area is the abundance of white rocks piled alongside the roads, on top of walls, on roofs of houses, and over door-frames. People in the region mix two religions together — Tibetan Buddhism and an indigenous belief system, which has as its core the worship of white rocks.

Our pilgrimage to Shangri-La during the rainy season was full of wet and wonderful muddy memories. Even though we enjoyed it, after drying out we went on to Plan B, a dry desert. Next time I'll visit Shangri-La in spring!



1. A Tibetan man in Zhongdian
2. Fortress-like Tibetan houses scattered in a valley
3. At a mushroom market
4. An exotic flower and butterfly in the land called Shangri-La

Tips for the Traveller

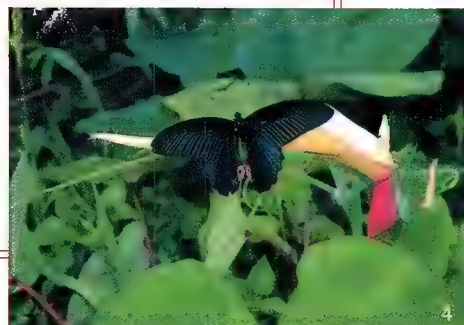
When to go: For spring colour, visit in May when the azalea and rhododendron bushes are in bloom. For summer colour, visit in late June when the grasslands are in bloom. For autumn colour, visit in October when the larch, birch, and aspen have turned golden. As for weather, rainy season is from late June to mid-September; there are many road washouts and landslides at this time. The roads are fairly manageable in May, early June, and early October. Snow and snow melt make late winter and early spring somewhat difficult.

How to get to Zhongdian: The most direct way is to fly to Kunming, capital of Yunnan Province. From there, fly to Lijiang (a daily flight under one hour in duration). From Lijiang, take one of the many buses to Zhongdian, or else hire a car and driver.

There are daily buses from Zhongdian to Dêqên and Xiangcheng. Buses from Xiangcheng to Kangding via Litang go every other day.

Overseas travellers need to obtain a travel permit before visiting Xiangcheng. Travel permits are also needed for going into Sichuan from Xiangcheng. Allow a few months to make the arrangements through a travel office, or visit the Public Security Bureau in Chengdu, capital of Sichuan Province. If a permit is denied, then travel to Kangding and obtain one there. This is the most indirect way to reach Zhongdian, though, and it will take around 10 days including securing permits.

Where to stay: There are numerous hotels in Zhongdian, from no star on up. Dêqên has a couple of tourist hotels, and Yanjing has but one inn. Xiangcheng, however, has one main tourist hotel and a variety of other hotels/inns.



The Dai People's Water-Splashing Festival in Jinggu

Photos by Li Yaobo Article by Dong Ai

The Water-Splashing Festival is actually the three-day celebration of the Dai New Year. Pervaded with an exciting spirit of mystery, the activities held in Jinggu, Yunnan, best demonstrate the Dai cultural tradition.

The New Year celebration is so called because central to it is the action of splashing water. It is the Dai's faith in Hinayana, a sect of Buddhism, that prompted and continues to propel the tradition. The activities and celebrations carried out still have a strong religious overtone despite the festival's loosened ties with Buddhism. However, as the festival's religious aspect has been diluted and largely replaced by recreational activities, it has become more accessible to other ethnic groups who share the land with the Dai people.

In mid-April last year, myself and some friends went to attend the Water-Splashing Festival in the Jinggu Dai and Yi Autonomous County in Yunnan. As Jinggu is a rather inaccessible place, little cultural influence from the outside world is felt; old traditions and customs are fundamentally intact. So, many religious ceremonies have been retained in the Water-Splashing Festival as they would have been for decades. Nonetheless, many new cultural and recreational programmes have been added.

Shanghan Bimaj, as this festival is known in the Dai dialect, in Jinggu is much the same as in other concentrated communities of the Dai people. In the Dai calendar, it usually takes place from

June 16 to 19, or the middle of April in the Gregorian calendar. While the Water-Splashing Festival is held in several townships, we chose Yongping.



Busy New Year's Eve

We arrived in the village on New Year's Eve day, the first day of the festival. We found every household in the village was busy cleaning their houses and making other preparations. Young people were taking baths and changing into fresh new clothes, while older people were engaged in food preparation for the festival, such as slaughtering chickens and cattle, steaming glutinous rice, as well as making cakes and bean jelly.

The religious activities of the day were held in the Buddhist temple, so we followed a gentleman named Mian and a few other elders who would be obliged to do some voluntary labour in the temple that day. They were required to create various kinds of white elephants and masks for the festival. The Dai women were responsible for fetching water from the well to help monks wash Buddhist statues and generally clean the temple. Others turned up to carry sand from the riverside to build sand pagodas. All this preparation was for an important Buddhist activity that would take place that day — washing dust away from the statue of Buddha and then covering it with drapes.

The Dai people believe that dust must be washed from the Buddhist statue, so that the Buddha would continue to bless the people and animals of the whole village in the new year. Only





very clean water, which has had lilac wood steeped in it, is allowed to be used to wash the statue.

Monks sprinkle the fragrant water onto the Buddhist statue from head to toe and then mop the year's accumulated dust away with their hands. It is believed that the water dripping from the Buddhist statue can cure disease. Hence, when the Buddhist statue was washed, many villagers came to gather the lilac and dust-tinged water to bathe in. After the washing was finished, three layers of clean cloth, known as kasayas, were wrapped around the statue. The Dai people call this "draping the Buddha".

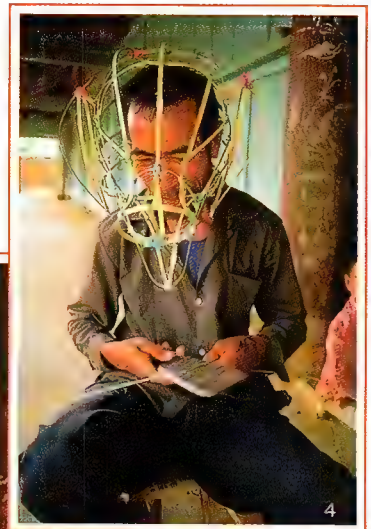
Like the washing and draping of the Buddha, making sand pagodas is another important activity for New Year's Eve. Sand is considered by the Dai to be pure and clean. Indeed, the sand pagoda built on New Year's Eve day is as sacred as any Buddhist pagoda or statue, because it is built as a place for the holy spirit to reside.

With that in mind, in the early morning the whole village, including men and women, old and young, went to the riverside to procure fine sand and placed it near the temple. With the sand, they built one main central pagoda and at each of its four corners a smaller one. This pattern of pagodas was then surrounded with a sand wall. The main pagoda and its surroundings were decorated with colourful paper stripes, with sacrificial offerings placed on the site. Then a memorial ceremony was held.

The Dai people deem that by worshipping the sand pagoda, the holy spirit will not only pardon their sins committed in their previous life, but will also bless all the villagers with peace and happiness for the year ahead.

Meanwhile, all other preparations for the following two days were going on. For example, all liturgical instruments to be used during ceremonies and other activities must be made. Mr. Mian and his group busied themselves working with bamboo. First they split the bamboo into thin slices, then they made the slices into props of different types before pasting them with colourful

1. Elderly women preparing paper flowers for the sacrificial ceremony
2. Young ladies going to the mountain to pick fresh flowers
3. A white elephant model is made for the celebration as a symbol of good fortune.
4. Various masks are made with bamboo slices.
5. Before the Water Splashing Festival, women volunteer to clean the temple.

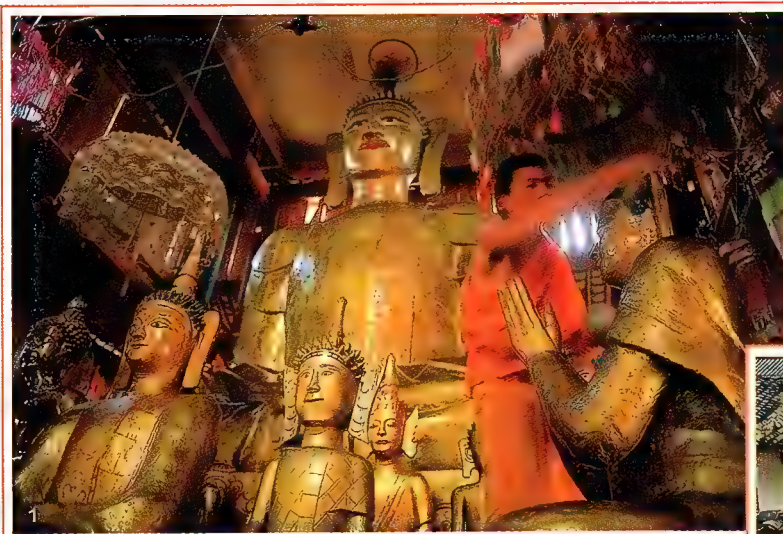


cloth or paper. Elderly women unable to go and pick wild flowers from the mountains, stayed at home and made paper flowers instead. When all the work was completed, they returned home to enjoy a well-deserved feast.

Dripping Water for the Dead

In terms of time, the second day of the Water-Splashing Festival is a vacant day; it belongs neither to the old year nor to the new.

At daybreak, while the earth still slumbered and the village was reigned by tranquillity — excepting the occasional cockcrow, the early risers, carrying baskets on their arms and calabash-shaped pots in their hands, walked hurriedly in twos and threes towards the Buddhist temple. There, they were to drip water, listen to the monks reciting the “Water-Dripping Scripture” and offer sacrifices to the dead.



By the time we reached the temple, about a dozen people were already there squatting at the entrance with bamboo baskets at their sides. Each person kept their gourd-like pots in their hands to drip water to the ground. This was for commemorating the souls of those who had died outside the village. Known as “drifting souls” by the Dai, the spirits of those who died outside are not allowed to enter the temple.

A moment later, a monk with a fan and a stick, to which a lit candle was bound at the end, came over to those people at the entrance to the temple. He began to recite the “Water-Dripping Scripture”. The villagers walked up to him one by one and dripped water onto his stick. The Dais believe that there are too many paths in the nether world, and the dead may not find the way home. The stick’s candlelight is to guide and illuminate their way for them.

Only after this ceremony was over did the villagers begin to enter the temple. Each family stood together, raising their pots high to pour water to the ground while praying: “Let us hold up the pot and drip the holy water. Oh holy water, you are like the

drops of our hot tears. Each drop dripping to the soil is a lament for our dear departed....” The temple was packed with people, and the voices reciting scripture could be heard far and wide.

Welcoming the Arrival of the ‘King of Life’

Early the next morning, we were awakened by the joyful sound of drums and gongs. We went out to have a look and found a team of villagers beating the Dai-style drum, called xiangjiao (elephant’s-leg) drum, and large gongs, to create a warm-up atmosphere for the day’s activities. On this, the New Year’s Day of the Dai calendar, the “King of Life” would arrive.

Young women went up to the mountains in the early morning to pick beautiful wild flowers to present to the Buddha and pray for his blessing. Before setting off, they took baths and changed into their holiday best. They returned carrying large bundles of fresh flowers in their arms, and walked in a line slowly down the

mountain slopes. In sharp contrast with the green fields, these flower bearers looked like a colourful ribbon. At the sight of them, the young men waiting in the village began to beat drums and gongs to welcome them. Upon their arrival, the recreational activities of the Water-Splashing Festival began.

It commenced with the Xianjiao (Elephant’s Leg) Drum Dance. Each performer, with a long drum slung from their shoulder, produced sound so vigorous and





After the recreational activities, young women holding fresh flowers walked in a neat line into the temple. They prostrated themselves before the statue of Buddha and prayed: "I've picked a bouquet of fragrant flowers and washed them in clean water. Here I present the holy and pure flowers to the wise and able god." They then expressed a wish from their hearts before tossing the flowers to the niche where the statue of the Buddha was seated. Blessed by the Buddha, the young girls believed that they could realise their dreams, and find an ideal husband in particular.

Water-splashing began formally after the young girls exited the temple. People carried buckets filled with clean water and fresh flowers. They dipped tree branches in the water and sprinkled the drops lightly onto each others' shoulders and backs. As they did so, they patted one-another on the back, cordially saying: "Wishing you good health and good luck!"

The Dai people regard the water as holy, pure and friendly; by sprinkling such water onto each other, mutual understanding is strengthened. Those who sprinkle the water show concern and love for others; and those who are sprinkled with the water feel honoured. Everyone is sincere and polite. No dirty water is used, and no one is allowed to splash at random. The Water-Splashing Festival is a sacred, pure and lively scene.

As dusk faded into night, everyone gathered in the square to set off fireworks and dance the folk Gayang dance, turning the mountain village into a blaze of light and colour. They happily danced to the rhythmical sounds of drums and gongs into the middle of the night.



Translated by Xiong Zhenru

rhythmical it compelled you to start dancing when you heard it. The Elephant's Leg Drum Dance is performed on almost all major occasions. Being a male dance, every Dai male can beat the drum and dance to it when they reach manhood.

Next came the Walking White Elephant, a traditional custom for sacrifice. It was performed by eight people: two men carried the model of a white elephant, one man acted as the guide, and the other five simply marched along in a procession. They walked one circle around the square.

The Peacock Dance began after the Walking White Elephant. Peacocks are plentiful in the region and their beauty is often compared to that of the Dai women. The Peacock Dance was something like a masked ball. The performers wore golden Bodhisattva hats, guardian spirit's masks on their faces and paper-made peacock feathers tied to their waists. A thread was used by the performer to spread the feathers like the tail of a male peacock at full strut. The performers danced about with peacock-like movements to the rhythmical beating of drums. A variation of the Peacock Dance was also performed. With the actors wearing different masks, it told the story of Xuanzang, a Tang-dynasty monk who journeyed to India to study Buddhism and brought back the Buddhist sutras to China, as depicted in the classic novel, *Journey to the West*. This shows the Han influence in the Dai culture.



1. Bathing a statue of Buddha
2. Guided by the monk's light, the spirits of those who died outside the village are supposed to find their way home.
3. The Elephant's Leg Drum Dance
4. Young women throwing their flowers to the Buddha
5. The elderly walking to the temple, carrying their sacrifices and water pots

The Jiugong Mountain, located in the southernmost part of Tongshan County in Hubei Province, is a famous sacred place of Taoism. Although it lies in the Yangtse River Valley, where summer is hot, this mountain is an exception. Its highest temperature reaches no more than 28°C in summer. The Taoist atmosphere and the pleasant climate make Jiugong Mountain an interesting and agreeable place to visit, and so I went.



Jiugong Mountain

Where the Dashing King Eternally Sleeps

Photos by Xia Xunnan
Article by Xia Xunnan, Xia Yu

The Beautiful Peach-Tree Terrace

To get to Jiugong Mountain, I rode on a motorcycle and ran from the county seat of Tongshan along the 106 State Highway towards the southeast and, after about an hour, reached Hengshitan Town. From there I turned to the right and came to the foot of Jiugong Mountain. I rode upward along the winding mountain road, and after I passed the mouth of Taoyuanxi Valley half up the mountain, the Peach-Tree Terrace came into sight.

The place really deserves its name. I had heard that torrents of spring water dashed out for several miles from the valley along the stream in spring and summer, but it was dry season when I arrived and all I saw was clear water gurgling down among the cobbles. If it had



been hot summer, I would have stopped my motorcycle to jump into one of the small pools to wash away travel stains.

After visiting the Guaisong (Strange Pine) Slope near the Peach-Tree Terrace, I rode on to the ancient Yunguan Temple and many other scenic spots such as the Shizi (Lion) Cliff, Shijian (Sword-Testing) Stone, the Ancient Pass, and the Wanshan Rock Carvings. Along the way I enjoyed the beautiful scenery, took photos and hummed to myself. But before I knew it, the red sun had moved to the west. The best time of the day had arrived, so without the slightest hesitation I hastened to Yunzhong (Cloud) Lake on the mountain.



Cloud Lake at Sunset

The Cloud Lake lies at 1,230 metres above sea level among the peaks of the Jiugong Mountain. It is the largest alpine lake in southern Hubei. As soon as I reached the top of the mountain, I climbed to the First Sky Gate, the highest point of the lakeside, to find the best position to take a picture of the famous view of sunset on Cloud Lake. I waited there for some time,

but there was no trace of sunset clouds on the horizon. The red sun was rapidly setting in the western sky. Just as I was about to turn back, suddenly, a large sheet of red rays appeared in the sky, and a blast of wind rushed up dark clouds, waves upon waves. Fortunately, I was not too slow to raise my camera, so that I captured the wonderful scene of the lake shrouded by crimson clouds at sunset.

After supper that evening, I took a stroll alone along the lakeside. When I reached the Phoenix Ridge, I saw shops standing row upon row on the brilliantly lit streets and a myriad of lights reflected in the lake. Cloud Lake became a beautiful luminous pearl in the dark night.

Sunrise at the First Sky Gate

Early the next morning, while it was still dark, I got up and groped my way up to the First Sky Gate at more than 1,400 metres above sea level. The place is very precipitous and provides a wide field of vision. In the past a temple was built here, and a couplet written on the pillars of its hall read: "Be careful when you enter the gate; don't be muddle-headed when you pass the place." However, only ruins of the temple remain, and it has become a place for visitors to watch the sun rising from the sea of clouds.

With an unspeakably strange feeling, I waited there for the sunrise. Gradually, the eastern sky became white along the horizon, then the gleam of dawn shimmered, and a sheet of rosy clouds emerged. The rosy clouds enlarged slowly till the whole eastern sky turned red. Looking at the marvellous scene, I naturally didn't want to miss the opportunity to record it for posterity. I took out my camera and began to take pictures one after another. Unfortunately, I got the wrong light sensitivity and ruined all the pictures I took. However, the beautiful scene was captured as a deep impression in my mind.

Waterfall at the Dragon-Fighting Precipice

After breakfast I went to watch the waterfall at Longdou (Dragon-Fighting) Precipice. A legend about the place went like this: In the Tang Dynasty (618-907) two Taoist nuns cultivated themselves in the Jiugong Mountain, but because they were short of supernatural power, they

could not turn immortal.

So, they came to the Dragon-Fighting Precipice to give their lives. The Jade Emperor showed sympathy for them and accepted them as immortals. From then on, the Dragon-Fighting Precipice has been also called Life-Giving Precipice.

Once I got to the top of the precipice, I was amazed by the scene that came into sight: White clouds rolled in the bottomless valley. The sound of the waterfall was heard but could not be seen. The Penxue (Snow-Spraying) Cliff underfoot was engulfed in the surging sea of clouds. In an instant I felt I had been thrown into mid-air and taken in by the Jade Emperor. But the clouds on the Jiugong Mountain come and go quickly. In half an hour they were taken away with the wind, the Snow-Spraying Cliff revealed its original features with the fall dripping down "like 1,000 pieces of white silk hang high over a pool of clear water", and I too, returned to the earthly world.

Entering the Primeval Forest

While in the Jiugong Mountain area, no visitor should miss its primeval forest. Nor did I. To get there I surmounted the summit of Tonggubao (Bronze-Drum) Peak, 1,500 metres above sea-level. I then went down westward along the winding mountain road, passed by the Fengchekou (Windmill Pass) and the Ancient Temple, rode through the Anping Forest and came to lodge in the administrative centre of the Jiugong Mountain Nature Reserve. My exploratory tour in the primeval forest would commence the following day.

I got up very early the next morning to head for the gorge in the protection zone. At the entrance to the gorge, I found two streams running out — one from the south and the other from the west. At their juncture stands a simply-styled bamboo tower named Ding-Dong Pavilion, on the left side of which lies the Cuigu Primeval Forest. The forest itself is sandwiched in between two high peaks — the Shiren (Stone-Man) Mountain on the left and the Laoya (Crow) Peak on the right.

The gorge is full of sheer cliffs. Tall ancient trees tower into the sky; there are few traces of human presence. As I walked further into the forest, it became denser. In some places the sunlight was completely shut out. The atmosphere was ghastly and bloodcurdling.

As a matter of fact, there was no track in the gorge. Occasionally I had to beat my way through the forest, wade across streams and climb up cliffs. The rocks were overgrown with slippery moss, and very often



1. The cloud sea at the Life-Giving Precipice
2. A spring dashes out from the rocks, creating a small fall.
3. The carved stone pagoda at the ancient Yunguan Temple
4. The archway of Li Zicheng's tomb
5. The statue of Li Zicheng set on Jiugong Mountain

I had to clamber on all fours. Every now and then wild birds, such as pheasants, suddenly sprang up to take flight close by, giving me a start. Fortunately enough, by this time I had a local cultural official travelling together with me, so that I did not feel too lonely or terrified.

With my heart in my mouth I trod for a few miles with my guide before coming to a huge cliff. It blocked our way and a waterfall about 10 metres wide came down from the cliff's top. With a bit of effort I succeeded in ascending the cliff and waded through a deep pool. Coming by a stream I took a few mouthfuls of spring water and ate some wild fruit. Soon after my tour of experiencing life in the primeval forest came to an end.

The Mausoleum of the Dashing King

At last it was time to fulfil my quest, to pay homage to the tomb of Dashing King, the leader of a massive peasants' uprising at the end of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). It is on Xiaoyue (Small-Moon) Mountain on the Niuji Range, three km from the nature reserve. In 1645, Li Zicheng, the Dashing King, headed his army eastward, but failed. So he left Wuning in Jiangxi for Tongshan via the Taiping Mountain. On his way he was murdered and buried there.



In a drizzle, I paid homage to the heroic Dashing King. Viewed from a distance, the Small-Moon Mountain was covered in red leaves, which looked like rosy clouds. Shrouded in a thin layer of mist with a strong autumnal atmosphere, the place looked desolate and solemn. The mausoleum, built along the mountain slope, has a large stone memorial archway in the forefront marking the sepulchre of the Dashing King.

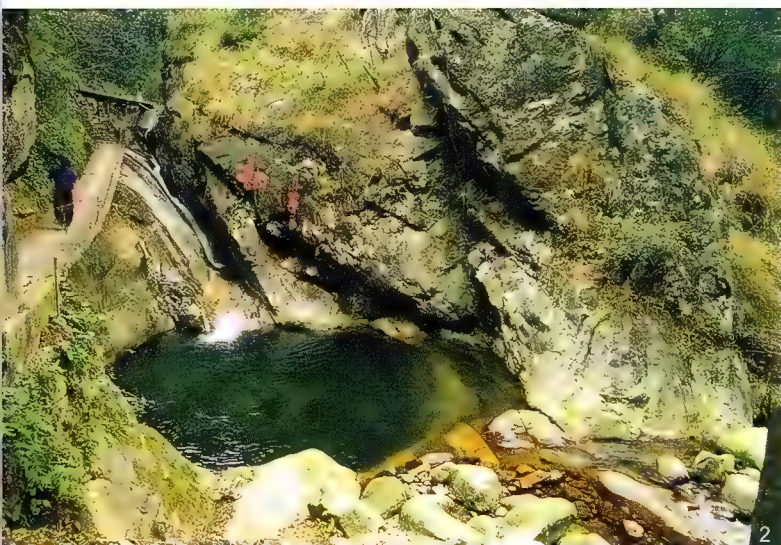
After passing through the archway and climbing up the staircase, I came to the sacrificial altar of Li Zicheng's tomb. Surrounded by granite slabs, the elliptic tomb has a vaulted top overgrown with grass. On a huge marble gravestone before the tomb is an inscription by Guo Moruo: "Li Zicheng's Tomb". Not far from the tomb is the very place where the Dashing King died. It is a rock projecting from the slope where a fierce battle was fought.

I had a really enjoyable tour of Jiugong Mountain — seeing the beautiful scenes of evening glow, sunrise and waterfall as well as exploring primeval forest, and even lamenting the past.

Translated by Xiong Zhenru

1. Crimson clouds at sunset

2. An inviting pool to swim in



Tips for the Traveller

Transport: The three-hour, 120-km bus ride from Wuhan to Tongshan costs 20 yuan. Buses start from Xinhua Road in Hankou and the Railway Station in Wuchang every day from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is 58 km from the county seat to Cloud Lake. Buses and taxis are available.

Accommodation: There are many hotels and inns by Cloud Lake for visitors to choose from.



Readership Survey

China Tourism always appreciates feedback from the readers. According to your suggestions, we have recently added a variety of new columns to satisfy different demands. Still, we need to know more of your opinions, including criticisms and suggestions. Please take a couple of minutes to complete this questionnaire and return it to us. Thank you!

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Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire. It provides us with invaluable feedback which will help us improve *China Tourism* magazine for you.

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Chongqing's New Sichuan Dishes and Local Flavour Snacks

Photos & article by Xiao Gang



Chongqing's locals have long been known for their distinctive taste. To be more specific their taste is for delicacies with strong and pungent flavours. Chongqing cooking is an important sub-division of Sichuan cuisine, which is a cooking school that draws strength from strong local colour. The new Sichuan dishes of the Chongqing style are typically served up as if they were priceless art works. The chefs always garnish their dishes with dainty "sculptures" made of fresh fruits and vegetables. Their meticulous carving skills produce lifelike decorations, adding an artistic touch to the delectable food. The dishes are so nicely presented that you almost do not feel like eating them — for fearing that such a beautiful picture would be ruined.

Your taste buds will be cheered up by the great depth of flavour in Sichuan dishes. For example, their peppery flavours include red chili oil, sour and spicy, fish-flavoured, dried orange peel flavour, guaiwei (strange flavour) sauce and many more besides. The last three are commonly used in dozens of dishes, such as sliced chicken in guaiwei sauce, shrimps in a fish-flavoured sauce and beef with dried orange peel. Pungent dishes may also carry a hint of garlic, ginger, mustard, sesame, five spices, smoked or fermented flavour. Smoked spareribs, anchovy in sesame sauce, and pickled pork in wine are some of the newest examples of these aromatic

dishes. Besides these tastes, bean sauce, tomato sauce, lychee sauce and sweet and sour sauce are also commonly used to bring about the salty, sour or sweet tastes of the area.

Apart from their appearance and taste, Chongqing dishes are also remarkable for their names, either auspicious ones such as "Quadruple Happiness" and "Five Fortunes", or historical ones such as "Li Bai's Duck" and "Imperial Concubine's Chicken", which stir the imagination as well as the taste buds.

For typical local dishes, you can go to the Haochi (Delicious) Street on Bayi Road, the most famous eating spot in Chongqing. Some names for your diary are Old Sichuan, Mountain City Sweet Dumplings, Zhengdong Dandan Noodles, Wang's Duck and Minsheng Food City.

There is also a wide choice for snacks. One of the most in-demand are the glutinous rice dumplings stuffed with either sweet sesame paste or salty meat, wrapped up in fresh bamboo leaves or orange tree leaf. The subtle scent of the leaves is soaked up by the juices of the dumplings.

Other culinary highlights include Wu's Chaoshou (wonton) and Guoqiao (Bridge-crossing) Chaoshou. Wu's chaoshou is ready to go eat, tender and juicy. Guoqiao chaoshou, however, has to be dipped into different sauces, this is to let the chaoshou "cross bridges" between flavours. Other recommendations are: glutinous rice cakes, which are best served cold; the golden sesame seed cakes, which should be crispy on the outside with softer centres; the petite sweet dumplings that have translucent wrappers, and the freshly made Dandan Noodles and spicy jellied bean curd. Fermented rice soup and sweet rice soup, both mellow and aromatic, go well with a Chongqing meal.

Translated by Jess Tang

Tips

Hotels such as Jinshan and Holiday Inn Yangtze serve the authentic new Sichuan dishes. The Haochi Street on Bayi Road is where most of the local snacks can be tasted.

1. The vivid dragon image greatly increases your appetite.
2. Camel's Paw Surrounded by 100 Birds
3. Stewed Mixed Vegetables, a delight for the vegetarians
4. A table of cold dishes





Banquet of Whitefish from Songhua Lake

Songhua Lake, during the fall, unfolds before the eyes as a vast expanse of purely blue water surrounded by endless undulating mountain ranges dyed red by autumn tree leaves. Located in the suburbs of Jilin in Jilin Province, it is the largest man-made lake in Northeast China. With the looming mountains reflected in the water, the lake is very fascinating. You may board a pleasure-boat and venture far across the lake to explore its 100 islets, or simply have a sightseeing tour to enjoy the fiery red autumn scenes around the lake.

Conversely, sitting on Songhua's shore, you can enjoy the uniquely-shaped mountain peaks and jagged rocks surrounding the lake just as easily. With a thin mist drifting over its surface in early morning and the glow of the setting sun lingering in the sky in the evening, the lake is as beautiful as any fairyland spoken of in legends. Hence it has become a popular destination for tourists, many of whom seek lodging in a hotel or a mountain villa on the lakeside.

Covering an area of more than 500 square kilometres, Songhua Lake is also well renowned for its fish. The most famous fish is Songhua whitefish, which was served as a tribute to the imperial court in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). Visitors can enjoy dining on whitefish at any lakeside restaurant near the Pleasure-Boat Dock and the Big Dam.

There are many ways to cook whitefish: steamed in clear soup, braised in soy sauce, fried, cooked in sweet and sour sauce, and others. As the lake water is pure and clean, fish freshly caught from it can be cut into thin slices and eaten raw with condiments. But the best way to eat whitefish is to scald the thin slices in a pot of boiling water. Other fishes from the lake are also good enough for a hotpot dish.

At Songhua Lake, you can even try a banquet of whitefish, which is offered at a reasonable price. If 10 people dine together at one table, it costs only about 300 yuan excluding drinks. A steamed whitefish



weighing roughly 500 grams is around 15 yuan.

Should you fancy such a feast, the best time to visit Songhua Lake is summer and autumn. From the city of Jilin, take one of the special-line minibuses which run directly to the Fengman Big Dam. From there you may go directly to the dock to board a pleasure-boat and begin sightseeing around the lake. For

lodging, the state-run Songhua Lake Hotel is recommended. In addition to being open to business all year round, the hotel has pleasure-boats for hire. Its environment is very quiet and guests can enjoy views of the lake and surrounding mountains from within. Its standard rooms cost 120-240 yuan and the hotel can be reached by telephone: (432) 4690203.



Translated by Xiong Zhenru

1. Hotpot white fish, a favourite of all visitors to Songhua Lake
2. Small fish like these are good for making a dish of fried fish.
3. Whitefish from the pure, clean, unpolluted lake can be eaten raw.
4. Many hotels occupy the Songhua Lakeside, making accommodation and dining very convenient.



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Focus on Yunnan

The mountainous wonderland of Yunnan enjoys a favourable warm climate year round. Its capital, Kunming, sitting alongside Yunnan's largest lake, Dianchi, has the honourable name of "Spring City". The province is full of natural wonders and cultural relics, such as the Stone Forests, the Shangri-La, and the ancient cities of Dali and Lijiang. With over 20 diverse ethnic groups making up about one-third of the population, opportunities abound for you to see their characteristic cultures and customs.



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Focus on Fujian

Situated on the southeast coast, Fujian Province overlooks Taiwan Island across the Taiwan Strait. Its mountainous landscape includes the Wuyi Mountain Scenic Area, one of the UN World Heritage sites in China. The province's zigzag coastlines, numerous beaches and charming seas offer spectacular scenic beauty as well as historical and cultural interest in such places as the Drumming Wave Islet in Xiamen and the Mazu Temple in Meizhou Island.



Focus on Fujian

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Focus on Shanghai

Shanghai, the largest metropolis in China, and formerly the Far East financial centre, has experienced dramatic development over the past century. The world-famous Bund along the Huangpu River shows you buildings of different historical periods and varied architectural styles, while skyscrapers are rising in the new area of Pudong. Shanghai's multiculturalism is seen in its music — operas, nostalgic jazz and discos — and in the busy commercial district of Nanjing and Huaihai roads.



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Focus on Shaanxi

Shaanxi is the cradle of the Chinese civilisation and Xi'an was the capital of 13 dynasties. This has left Shaanxi a rich legacy of historical sites and cultural relics. In the provincial capital Xi'an, there is the fascinating terracotta army unearthed from the tomb of the First Emperor, Qin Shihuang; the tomb of Tang-dynasty Wu Zetian, China's first empress; and the stele forest. The province's beauty is capped with the sheer cliffs of Mount Huashan and the yellow earth of the Loess Plateau.



Focus on Shaanxi

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Focus on Guangdong

An important gateway into China, the fertile Pearl River Delta of the southern province of Guangdong fans out from Guangzhou to the South China Sea and borders Hong Kong and Macao. The province's natural scenic spots include the limestone pinnacles of Zhaoqing's Seven Star Crag, the red sandstone of Danxia Mountain, and the volcanic beauty of Xiqiao Mountain. The capital, Guangzhou, offers plenty of history in its museums, temples, mosques and old colonial buildings.

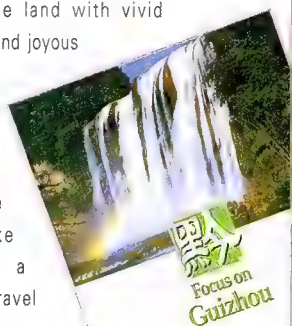


Focus on Guangdong

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Focus on Guizhou

Guizhou is a land of splendid natural scenery. Its towering mountains and karst landforms team up with the gurgling rivers and magnificent waterfalls to form a wonderful work of Mother Nature. Huangguoshu Waterfalls and the limestone caves are the province's most frequented scenic spots. The 17 ethnic groups living in the picturesque province further colour the land with vivid customs and joyous festivals. It is its natural beauty and culture that make Guizhou a perfect travel destination.



Focus on Guizhou

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Focus on Tianjin

Tianjin, one of the four municipalities under direct Central Government administration, is an important industrial and commercial centre of China and the biggest port in the north. The history of the city can be found in its Ancient Culture Street, 100-year-old Western-style buildings, Opera Museum and Mazu Temple. Besides the TV Tower and the Haihe River in the city, there are scenic spots in the outskirts, including the Dule Temple and the Great Wall at Huangya Pass.



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Focus on Xinjiang

On the vast land of Xinjiang in Northwest China, there are mountains, basins, deserts and lakes, which provide tourists with numerous attractions — ruins of ancient cities and tombs along the Silk Road; Turpan, an oasis in the desert; Kanas Lake, a gem imbedded in the Altay Mountains; Bayanbulak — the Swan Lake; and the world's second largest desert, the Taklimakan. The minority ethnic groups living in Xinjiang, such as the Uygur, Kazak, Mongolian, Uzbek, Tajik, Xibe, Kirgiz and Tatar, all have their own unique colourful culture.



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Focus on Beijing

Beijing is a metropolis of everlasting charm. There are simply too many captivating things to see, to experience and to taste in this grand city with both old glamour and new mobility. There are historical sites such as the Palace Museum (the Forbidden City), the Temple of Heaven, the Summer Palace, and the Ming Tombs; there are also many scenic spots in its outskirts. Recently, tours have been organised for visitors to taste the real Beijing flavour of life — touring the small back lanes, having tea in a traditional-style teahouse and enjoying the Peking Opera.



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Focus on Shanxi

Shanxi Province, one of the birthplaces of the Chinese civilisation, has impressive ancient architecture and a wealth of well-preserved Buddhist temples, monasteries and grottoes. Among the most famous are the Yungang Grottoes containing some of China's oldest sculptures and Buddhist art, the Yonge Palace, the Jinci Temple, the Hanging Monastery built on a sheer cliff and the Wutai Mountain, one of China's most famous sacred Buddhist lands.



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Focus on Guangxi

Unusual topography has endowed the province with numerous spectacular karst formations — limestone caves, pinnacles and rocks. The most famous and enchanting scenic spot is Guilin, and the most travelled route, on the Lijiang River from Guilin to Yangshuo. The coastal city of Beihai has the country's largest beach, the Silver Beach. Other attractions include the varied traditional customs of ethnic minorities, the Sino-Vietnamese border area, and the mysterious Huashan cliff paintings.



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	Manzhouli Friendship Hotel	***	East side of the International Trade Bldg, Yidao St, Manzhouli	021400	(470) 6223274	(470) 6223828
	Manzhouli Guest House (New Building)	**	Yidao St, Manzhouli	021400	(470) 6222859	
	Gongjiao Hotel Manzhouli	*	22 Shizheng St, Manzhouli	021400	(470) 6224913	
Hailar	Beiyuan Hotel	***	3 Shengli Rd, Hailar	021008	(470) 8235888	(470) 8235888
	Hailar Guest House	**	Dongsidao St, Hailar	021000	(470) 8334311	
	Beier Hotel Hailar	**	36 Central St, Hailar	021000	(470) 8332511	
Zalantun	Zalantun Hotel	*	Mingyue St, Zalantun	162650	(470) 3204845	

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	Qiqihar Longjiang Hotel	*	57 Longhua Rd, Qiqihar	161005	(452) 2127981	
	Qiqihar Nenjiang Guest House	*	7 Fengheng Rd, Longsha District, Qiqihar	161005		
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	Harbin International Hotel	***	4 Dazhi St W, Harbin	150001	(451) 3641441	(451) 3625651
	Heilongjiang Linyuan Hotel	**	118 Tiandi St, Harbin	150010	(451) 4670458	(451) 4671248
	Friendship Palace Hotel (East Building)	**	57 Youyi Rd, Harbin	150010	(451) 4616146	
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Trains to and from **Manzhouli**

Train No.	Route	Dep.	Arr.
301/303	Beijing — Tianjin — Harbin — Qiqihar — Zalantun — Yakeshi — Hailar — Manzhouli	0938	Tianjin: 1123 Harbin: 0300 (next day) Qiqihar: 0721 Zalantun: 1020 Yakeshi: 1434 Hailar: 1554 Manzhouli: 1845
302/304	Manzhouli — Hailar — Yakeshi — Zalantun — Qiqihar — Harbin — Tianjin — Beijing	1200	Hailar: 1439 Yakeshi: 1612 Zalantun: 2021 Qiqihar: 2304 Harbin: 0327 (next day) Tianjin: 1910 Beijing: 2026
Y211	Harbin — Hailar — Manzhouli	2038	Hailar: 0725 (next day) Manzhouli: 1010
Y212	Manzhouli — Hailar — Harbin	1553	Hailar: 1835 Harbin: 0643 (next day)
Y229	Qiqihar — Hailar — Manzhouli	2020	Hailar: 0437 (next day) Manzhouli: 0728
Y230	Manzhouli — Hailar — Qiqihar	0930	Hailar: 1223 Qiqihar: 2112
657	Hailar — Manzhouli	0804	1059
655	Hailar — Manzhouli	1059	1429
656	Manzhouli — Hailar	1110	1419
658	Manzhouli — Hailar	1945	2217

* For reference only.

Flights to and from **Harbin**

Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Beijing — Harbin	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0800	0950	CA1603
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0840	1015	XW 127
	1 4	1030	1200	F6 5933
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1145	1320	WH2603
	1 3 5 7	1220	1345	3U 601
	3	1230	1355	CJ6212
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1300	1450	CA1623
	2	1305	1445	XO9601
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1700	1830	CJ6218
	1 4	1740	1920	CJ6212
	7	1750	1920	CJ6212
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1750	1930	CA1621
	2 5	1830	2000	CJ6260
	1 3 6	1905	2035	CJ6280
	1 3 4 7	2010	2140	CJ6272
	2 5 6	2010	2140	CJ6212
Harbin — Beijing	1 3 4 7	0850	1030	CJ6271
	2 5	0930	1105	CJ6259
	1 3 6	0930	1105	CJ6279
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1000	1140	CJ6211

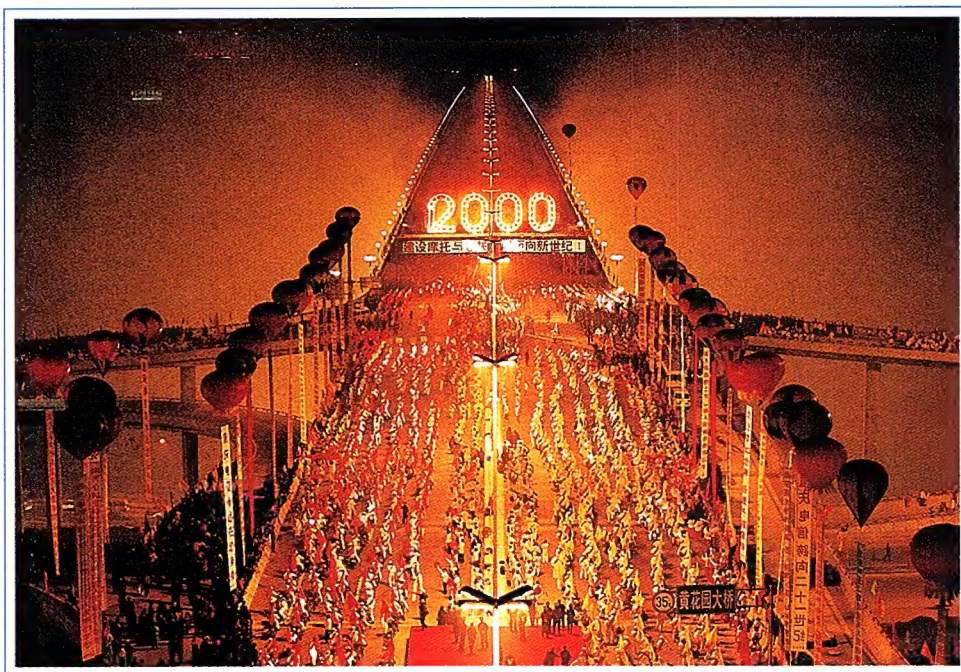
Route	Days	Dep.	Arr.	Flight
Harbin — Beijing	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1040	1215	CA1604
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1055	1230	XW 128
	4	1240	1405	F6 5934
	1	1240	1410	F6 5934
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1405	1540	WH2604
	1 3 5 7	1420	1605	3U 602
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1440	1620	CJ6217
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1525	1710	CA1624
	2	1545	1735	XO9602
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	2020	2205	CA1622
Chongqing — Harbin	7	0920	1400	SZ4643
	2	1745	2115	CJ6944
Harbin — Chongqing	2	0840	1245	CJ6943
	7	1440	1930	SZ4644
Guangzhou — Harbin	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0825	1350	CZ3603
	3 6	0925	1435	SZ4633
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1250	1640	CJ6292
Harbin — Guangzhou	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	0750	1150	CJ6291
	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	1435	1935	CZ3604
	3 6	1520	2020	SZ4634

* For reference only.

Airline codes:

CA = Air China CJ = China Northern Airlines CZ = China Southern Airlines F6 = CNAC-Zhejiang Airlines SZ = China Southwest Airlines
WH = China Northwest Airlines XO = Xinjiang Airlines XW = China Xinhua Airlines 3U = Sichuan Airlines

To record the historical moment of the turn of the century, Hong Kong China Tourism Press specially staged the activity of Recording the 48 Hours Greeting the New Millennium in China. More than 600 photography buffs from all over the country participated. Through the lenses of their cameras, they captured the



snatches of the last day of 1999 and the first day of 2000.

shared by others who were witnesses of their oaths.

- **The First Ray of Sunlight:** To welcome the first ray of sunlight of 2000, people in jubilant moods gathered at Shitang Town in East China's Zhejiang Province to wait for the fireball rising for the first time in the new century.

- **Bell-Tolling at the Turn of the Century:** After the clock struck 12, bells were tolled across the extensive territory of China, bidding farewell to the last century and bringing hope and blessing to the new one.

- **Babies of the Millennium:** The mothers of the millennium babies were overwhelmed with happiness. Some of them had deliberately advanced the delivery, trying to give birth to the first baby of the new millennium.

- **Inherit the Past, Usher in the Future:** The arrival of the new century was not only a moment for celebration, but also for retrospection and anticipation...

- **Wedding of the Century:** The couples who chose to get married during those 48 hours made their marriages even more meaningful. Their joy was also

- Meanwhile, the detail-conscious amongst us continue to espouse that the new century won't commence until 2001; just as a baby can't be considered a year old until it reaches the one year mark, so too is a decade, century or millennium judged.

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